The Force By Any Other Name

by avarand

Summary

It’s not like Anakin Skywalker asked to lose his mother, or have the scar from that day, or to be the Chosen One. In fact until Professor Windu had shown up at Cousin Owen’s house before his 11th birthday, he hadn’t even known that magic was the name for what he could do. (Story now revised to remove grammar/formatting errors and plot inconsistencies.)
Anakin Skywalker and the Hogwarts Express

Anakin looked about hopelessly inside the train station, standing between platforms 9 and 10. Neither Professor Windu’s information nor Professor Jinn had told him how to do this. And since Cousin Owen was a hands-off kind of guardian and a Muggle, he had dropped Anakin off outside the station and driven away. Looking about with his heart pounding in his chest and a sweaty hand on his loaded trolley, he almost jumped out of his skin when a woman with dark skin put her hand on his shoulder.

“Hogwarts, dear?” the stranger asked him, her dark eyes glinting with concern. Anakin’s panic went immediately to relief. Maybe he wouldn’t be stranded after all.

“Yes!” he replied almost too loudly and immediately lowered his voice. “Um, that is, yes please. I’ve never—that is, my cousin’s a Muggle and he doesn’t—I don’t—”

The woman chuckled softly at his attempts to force multiple sentences out at one time. “It’s ok.” She patted his shoulder gently. “My daughter is heading off for her first year too. I’m Ashla Tano, and this is my daughter, Ahsoka.” Anakin saw that just behind the woman was a trolley packed carrying a large trunk and a barn owl in a cage, and beside it was a girl who had vibrant blue eyes and dark hair hanging in hundreds of braids with blue and white beads worked in. Her dark skin was just like her mother’s and she waved shyly. Anakin returned her wave and both children listened attentively as Ms. Tano explained how to walk through the barrier. Ashla disappeared into the brick wall instantly, leaving Anakin grinning ear to ear. He and Ahsoka exchanged looks before nodding and pushing into the barrier together. Both laughed as the reached the other side and Ahsoka even let out a whoop of delight. Ahead of them was the Hogwarts Express. Anakin couldn’t help but stare in awe. He loved anything with an engine or motor in it and the Express was the first train he’d seen up close. Spotless black and red paint gleamed off the cars as white smoke billowed around. What he wouldn’t give to slide under it and take a look. Owen was always complaining about the dismembered remote controlled and electronic toys he had taken apart and put back together in younger years before graduating to kitchen appliances and Owen’s own beat up Pontiac when the opportunity arose. Anakin took great pride in knowing more about cars than most of the adults who drove them. The Hogwarts Express was something else entirely. He’d never felt a magical presence directly tied to a machine before. He’d always been able to sense magic, but this...this was possibly the best discovery of his young life. He’d have given anything to get under the cars and see what made her tick.

“Young man!” Ms. Tano was saying with a smile in her eyes. She had apparently been trying to get his attention for some time.

“I’m sorry, what?” He asked feeling a bit sheepish.

“I was saying that you and Ahsoka should get a move on before the train leaves. Give yourselves time to find a compartment and get settled. I’m sure Hogwarts will be lucky to have you both.”

“Oh, right. Thank you again for your help.” He smiled, feeling less nervous around the woman who seemed to radiate compassion.

“Bye, mom!” Ahsoka threw herself into her mother’s arms for a last hug before she turned to Anakin. “Come on! Let’s get going!”

Anakin waved awkwardly to Ms. Tano once more before following Ahsoka onto the train. At a loss for what else he should do, he let Ahsoka take the lead and soon they found an empty compartment.
towards the back of the Express. Finally having stored their trunks, Ahsoka let her owl, Sato, out of his cage to flit about the compartment.

When Professor Jinn had taken Anakin shopping for school supplies, they’d of course visited the Owl Emporium. However upon learning that the school had plenty of owls for postal service, Anakin had gone a different route. So with some hesitation he let his new companion, Artoo, out of her cage. The cat was a sleek dark grey with bright blue eyes and a handful of white stripes. When Owen had asked why on earth he’d name a cat “Artoo”, all he’d been able to say was that that was simply her name and he’d just known it. When he’d seen her curled up away from the kittens and other cats, he’d known they belonged together.

“She’s beautiful!” Ahsoka grinned, sitting back in her seat. “Hey, by the way, I didn’t get your name.”

“Ah, Anakin. Anakin Skywalker.” He had been dreading this part. He loved everything about the magical world since he’d learned of it, except his own name. When he’d asked Professor Jinn how he could be famous for something he did as a baby, the man had said that people needed someone to hold up after years of darkness. Anakin still thought it was silly, though a bigger part of him resented that anyone who recognized him instantly knew his past. It was decidedly unfair.

“Wow!” Ahsoka exclaimed. “I thought I recognized your scar but I wasn’t sure. That’s- I mean- I’m really sorry about your mom, I mean I know it was a long time ago, and um...shutting up now.”

The boy had already lifted his hand self-consciously to cover the thick scar that bisected his right eyebrow and ended in an almost lightning bolt zig zag just below his cheek bone.

“It’s ok,” said Anakin. “It’s just kind of stupid to be famous for something I couldn’t even remember doing if I wanted to. I mean I don’t get the big deal. I didn’t even do anything. I was just lucky to survive.”

“Yeah...I can’t imagine..” Ashoka trailed off. “Hey, have you thought about what House you might be in? Or about our classes? I can’t wait for Defense Against the Dark Arts! I’ve almost read the textbook twice! Mom says Professor Windu is the best teacher we could have for that. Though I guess charms could be really cool, too…”

Shaking the rest of his nerves, Anakin smiled genuinely for the first time all day. He was glad he met Ahsoka. As the girl continued chattering animatedly and Artoo curled up in his lap with a soft purr, he thought maybe he’d be ok at Hogwarts after all.

Some hours later after in depth discussions on the inner workings of classes and textbook findings, (Anakin too having gone through all of his, finding Defence thrilling but Potions a bit confusing), their compartment door slid open. “Anything from the trolley, dears?” A plump witch asked. Having access to money for the first time in his life and seeing chocolate in front of him, the 11 year old boy gently slid Artoo off his lap and was soon carrying two arm fulls of sugar. Artoo cast him an annoyed look but curled up beside him instead. He scratched her ear in apology.

“Plenty for both of us” he told Ahsoka, unloading roughly half onto her seat.

“Really? You didn’t have to-chocolate frogs!” She abandoned her hesitation and picked up one of the strangely wrapped confections.

Anakin laughed. “I bought way too much for just me.”

Half way through a shared box of Bertie Bott’s Every Flavor Beans Anakin pondered again about
“What’s is it?” Ahsoka asked, noticing his pensive frown as the hillside went by.

“Just...do you think it really is a big deal if you get put in Slytherin?” Professor Windu had mentioned that all Dark wizards came from Slytherin. Apparently his own mother had been in Gryffindor and Windu was sure he’d be sorted there too. However Anakin had never thought of himself as particularly brave. What if he wasn’t as like his mother as people wanted him to be? He wished not for the first time that the two of them hadn’t been the end of the apparently once sizeable Skywalker lineage.

She thought for a moment. “I don’t think it’s bad to be in one House or another. Mom says that Houses aren’t good or bad, it’s all up to who the witch or wizard is. Every House has good and bad people in it.”

Relief washed over him so strongly he didn’t realize how on-edge he’d been waiting for her reply. That made sense. He’d be fine no matter what. He was going to learn magic! How could he not be fine?

Shortly after considering if he might in fact be sick to his stomach on chocolate frogs and acid pops, the witch who had pushed the trolley let them know they were due to reach Hogwarts in less than a half hour and that they should leave all luggage and animals behind in the compartment. Anakin scooped Artoo up and into her cage, which she loudly protested. “You big baby.” He crooned at her. “Sato went into his without a complaint.” Artoo hissed softly but he knew it wasn’t really out of malice. He slid his basic black school robes over his t shirt and jeans (a bit gratefully since his regular clothes were slightly ratty given Owen’s budget) and nervously hoped this would all go well.

As he and Ahsoka stepped off the Express a familiar voice rang out. “First years! This way, please! If all first year students would follow me please!” The friendly voice of Professor Jinn was extremely welcome. He even winked at Anakin after he had directed the first years into waiting boats. The man’s eyes always appeared to be smiling. The pair settled into a small row boat that Professor Jinn himself stepped into. “It’s good to see you again, young Mister Skywalker.” The wizard turned, his long grey hair falling behind him, and raised his wand, sending the boats slowly into motion across the lake. Anakin aborted his move for the oar, feeling a bit foolish.

“You already know a Professor?” Ahsoka asked, impressed.

Professor Jinn smiled. “I had the pleasure of taking young Mister Skywalker shopping for his school supplies.”

Glad they got the boat to themselves Anakin asked “You teach Transfiguration, right Professor? We were talking about looking forward to that class.”

“I’m glad to hear you say so”, the Professor replied. “Ah, now look here.” He gestured at the up towards the castle. It was now spectacularly backlit by the rising moon, the black and blue shadows playing off of it and the lake beautifully. “I never get tired of seeing her like this.”

Anakin lived on a Council Estate with his cousin. He had never hoped to see anything like this. Having skimmed through Hogwarts: A History could have never prepared him for the striking picture the castle made. And he’d be staying here! His face might hurt tomorrow because of his ear splitting grin, but it would be so worth it. The three row boat companions shared the vista in silence for the rest of the ride.

Professor Jinn pulled their boat up and ahead of the others and the two first years disembarked and
waited for the rest of their cohort for do the same. Once everyone was assembled and shuffling nervously, the Professor called them to file into single line and follow him into the castle. Hoping to minimize the odds that he’d be a spectacle, he pulled Ahsoka back until they secured a spot firmly in the middle of the line, grateful that she seemed to know what he was hoping to accomplish.

“Now,” the Professor said once everyone was inside. “I need you all to remain very quiet here. I’ll be back shortly to motion you forward.”

Not a minute before he had left in a sweep of robes, someone began loudly speculating about the Sorting. Suddenly it seemed like half the room was trying to outdo each other with outlandish theories. Everything from “fight a troll!” to “stand on your head!” was being suggested. Ahsoka rolled her eyes at the comments. “Like this information isn’t available from most of our parents? It’s so not okay to get the Muggle-born kids worked up.” Anakin nodded in agreement. But before he could respond, the line was moving and they were entering a massive hall. There were four huge tables packed with students in the center of the room, and he noticed impossibly high ceiling mirrored the sky outside. The sense of magic outside had been strong, but being in the castle was like nothing he’d felt before. Not even Diagon Alley had felt like this; as though the magic was so strong he was practically swimming in it. The air was thick it. It was almost overwhelming.

“Greetings!” Up ahead of the tables was a podium. Behind it stood an old wizard with long snow white hair and a wrinkled face. On second glance he seemed to be quite short and standing on stair step to reach the top of the podium. “Welcome to Hogwarts!” continued the wizard, who introduced himself as Headmaster Yoda. He was directly addressing their group of first years. “In these halls the most formative years of your education as witches and wizards will take place. Before we begin the Welcoming Feast, you must be sorted into your houses. Deputy Headmaster Windu will be conducting the ceremony, so quiet, if you please.”

The Deputy Headmaster walked in front of the podium and placed a rather ragged-looking hat upon a stool. As he retreated the hat began to sing. Anakin stared, transfixed as the hat sang about the virtues of each House. When it ended, Professor Windu unfurled a piece of parchment and called out “Amidala, Sola!” A young dark haired girl walked up nervously and placed the hat on her head while taking a seat on the stool. Within seconds the hat had called out “Ravenclaw!” and the table of Ravenclaw clapped as she ran over and took a seat with them. Anakin took a deep breath. Going alphabetically was going to take forever for them to get to him and he very much wanted this part over with.

“Hey!” Ahsoka whispered. He turned towards her as discreetly as he could. “Let’s make a pact! No matter what Houses we get put in, we’re still friends!” She held her hand out as if to shake. Anakin smiled gratefully.

“Of course. Friends no matter what.” And shook her hand firmly.

The minutes passed and Anakin stopped keeping track of who was sorted where. There weren’t any visible differences between the Houses and he was he’d be fine. He distantly noted that “Offee, Barris” and “Bonteri, Lux” had gone to Slytherin, while two identical twins, Rex and Cody Fett, had gone to Gryffindor and Hufflepuff respectively. Finally Professor Windu called out “Skywalker, Anakin!”

A hush fell over the entire room. Ignoring the eyes that all seemed to focus on, Anakin swallowed hard, screwed up his courage, and headed toward the Sorting Hat. He was seated and was pulling the hat over his head before he realized how quickly he had done it. Suddenly his was not the only voice in his mind. “Ah, a Skywalker. It’s been some time.” A voice that could only be the hat’s hummed. “Now where should we put you...a keen mind here, very sharp. And there’s courage too, no lack of that. A willingness to work hard and sacrifice, and potential so very much of it. Certainly
an ambitious soul. You’d do very well with any path, young Skywalker. What is your heart’s desire?” Anakin fervently thought that he just wanted to be wherever was right for him. A place where he belonged. “Ah, a place to call home, yes I know exactly where to put you.”

“Slytherin!” The hat bellowed. Anakin didn’t know a person could explode with relief, but having finally been Sorted that’s how he felt. As he went to take his place at the Slytherin table, Master Yoda was looking at him, somehow almost disappointed. Whatever, if this was where he was supposed to be, then so be it. He’d make the best of it. He didn’t ask to be anyone’s figure head and he never intended to do less than live his life on his own terms. Looking up from the Slytherin table, he caught the eyes of another professor. This man was old, but not as old as Headmaster Yoda. Had had close cropped grey hair that he was clearly losing to baldness and a rather hooked nose and narrow chin. Despite his smile something about was deeply unsettling about the man. Anakin always trusted his instincts and they were telling him that this man was nothing good. Suddenly his scar pulsed painfully and he averted his gaze. Thankfully Ahsoka was up so focused his attention on her. That hat was barely on her head before crying out “Gryffindor!” She shot him an apologetic smile on her way to her table, but he knew they’d still be friends Headmaster Yoda was delivering his final words to the students and before he knew it, food had appeared in massive quantities before them all. He shrugged off the glances of the two old men had given him and dug into the feast.
Just as he was contemplating whether or not he could possibly eat another piece of treacle tart, a young woman with light brown skin and a neat pattern of black diamond tattoos in the center of her chin stood and walked to front of the Slytherin table. Anakin noticed that in lieu of a witch’s hat she wore a hijab which elegantly framed her face. “Welcome first years, to Slytherin. And welcome everyone else for another year at Hogwarts.” Her calm tones and slight smile were a bit enchanting. “My name is Luminara Unduli. I am a 6th year and a prefect. First years, please follow me and I will show you to the Slytherin dorms. We’ll give you a chance to get settled before everyone else. This way to the dungeons.”

Dungeons? They were going to sleep in dungeons like in a horror movie? This was quite possibly the best day of Anakin’s life. As he and the other first years filed out of the Great Hall behind Luminara, a brunette boy who Anakin remembered from the Sorting as “Bonteri, Lux” walked alongside him. “Hello, name’s Lux,” he confirmed. “You’re Anakin, right?” Anakin shook the proffered hand. Everyone knew damn well who he was, but he appreciated the attempt at normalcy. “This is my cousin, Petro.” Exchanging nods, all three boys followed Luminara down a moving staircase which she pointed out to be wary of as it had a tendency to know when you were running late and slow you down even more. They passed windows with decreasing frequency and entered an area of the castle that was lit by spread out sconces.

Finally Luminara passed a closed door and stopped at a shortly past it. “This is the entrance to the Slytherin dorms.” She pointed with her wand to an area of stone wall between two sconces shaped like disembodied arms holding torches. “The password changes every fortnight and is always posted on the notice board in the common room. It is a House tradition that no one from another House is invited into these rooms. The only exception is Headmaster Yoda or Deputy Headmaster Windu in the event of an emergency. However it’s been over 700 years since we had any outsiders here and we intend to keep it that way.” With a flourish of robes she turned to the wall and said “Serpentis!” The wall parted as though someone had simply carved a doorway into it. Narrow and dim, the passageway led to what was clearly the Slytherin common room. At one end was a large fireplace with a framed painting of a serpent above it. The entire room feel like a cave, right down to most of the lighting being from soft green lights hanging from the stone ceiling like hybrids of stalactites and chandeliers. Carefully detailed carvings of snakes adorned pillars that on either end of the room, and in the middle were two large low-backed sofas and several chair and tables, all in varying shades of green and dark wood. The best part by far though was that the back wall was hardly a wall at all. It was a giant glass window into the very lake they’d ridden row boats across.

Smiling indulgently Luminara spoke to the group of ten or so around her. “As you can see, we are indeed underneath the lake in this part of the dungeons. You’ll see the giant squid go by here very frequently, as long as other inhabitants of the lake. Boys dorms are to the left a girls to the right. As Slytherins, your Head of House is Professor Palpatine, our Potions Master. His classroom is to the right of the dorm entrance. If you have problems or concerns or need a tutor, talk to him, or to myself or the other Prefect, Tenebris Maul. Just look for the surly guy with the spiky hair. And one more thing.” Here she took a deep breath. “Not everyone understands our House. The people in this dorm are your family while you’re at school. You can and should make friends in other Houses, but sometimes people think that because of where you got sorted, it makes you dark or different. And it’s not true. You’re here because you’re ambitious and willing to pursue your desires. You’re resourceful and protective, and if anyone tries to give you a hard time about your House, you
absolutely let me know.” She seemed to make a point of eyeing Anakin while she said this. “Also, to help welcome you to Hogwarts, you have been assigned a second year tutor. The tutor, as the Headmaster decided, will be from another House. They will approach you at some point tomorrow. So be polite, but if they are rude to you, that is not something you should tolerate. Now, your class schedules are waiting for you on your beds, so go get some sleep and win us some House points tomorrow.” She smiled benignly as they split up and went to find their beds.

The boys’ dorm had four large beds, surrounded by black curtains and each fitted with a dark green comforter and wooden headboard. Anakin spotted his trunk at the foot of one, Artoo’s cage resting on top of it. Artoo herself was curled up at the foot of the bed. He noticed Lux apparently had the bed next to his, with Petro across from him. The bed across from Lux apparently belonged to a boy who had so far been silent. Smiling across the dorm at the boy, he introduced himself. The boy replied with a smile of his own, “Tyzen Xebec, pleased to meet you.” Anakin was instantly relieved that someone else in his House had the same rougher accent as him, as opposed to the posh tones that Lux and Petro had. Suddenly feeling wrung out from the day, he climbed into bed and made a note to become friends with Tyzen. That night, lying in bed with Artoo curled at his feet and his uniform with green and silver ties and the Slytherin crest embroidered, Anakin couldn’t wait to start life as a wizard. The gentle sounds of moving lake water carried him into a deep sleep.

Earlier and elsewhere in the castle that night:

2nd year Hogwarts student Obi-Wan Kenobi settled into his dorm, organized his books for the next day and wondered how the Headmaster felt about the Chosen One being in Slytherin. He was sure he’d caught a frown on the elderly man’s face. Which seemed unfair given that he knew first hand bullies in the school came from all Houses. Knotting his yellow and black Hufflepuff tie into a neat Windsor and laying it with his books at the foot of his four-poster bed, he had to admit that the thought did make him a bit nervous. But Qui-Gon was always telling him not to judge people by anything except their actions, and he trusted his foster father completely. His own parents had been killed by the mysterious Dark Lord shortly before Shmi Skywalker’s own murder at his hands. He understood what it was to feel loss that permeated almost everything at times. And he knew what it was to lack any biological family; to be the last of a line. The loneliness could eat you alive if you weren’t careful.

Luckily his House was hell bent on creating strong ties. Head of Hufflepuff, Professor Billaba, had instituted a peer mentoring program years ago. It was the duty of every second year to mentor a first year student. It was such a success that all Houses now did it, and at the insistence of Professor Billaba, against the wishes of Professor Palpatine, the mentor and mentee must be from different Houses. Professor Palpatine had insisted that inter House relationships were more important to focus on for new students than intra House bonds, but with Billaba, Windu, and the Headmaster signing on he had lost that particular argument. Which brought Obi-Wan back to his current train of thought. The neat envelope with the name of the student to be under his tutelage this year clearly read “Anakin Skywalker”. Taking a deep breath, he reminded himself that it was a good system, and he and his own tutor had been very well matched. He and Padmé were still friends. The Ravenclaw girl was brilliant and he might not have gotten an O in Potions without her. (If he was convinced that Palpatine hated him, that was his business.) He finished changing into sleep clothes climbed into bed, pulling the curtains closed. He would talk to Skywalker tomorrow and it would be fine.

First Day of Classes:

Anakin woke with plenty of time to get breakfast. He scratched Artoo behind the ear before finding the showers and getting dressed. They had double potions with the Gryffindors first thing so he wasn’t worried about being late. He didn’t want to disturb his dorm mates so he went to the Great Hall alone. He was practically vibrating at the prospect of learning real magic. Outside the Hall he
practically collided with Ahsoka. She immediately enveloped him in a hug. “Anakin! Aren’t you excited? We have the first class together!”

“I know,” he laughed. “And hey, those colors suit you.”

“Thanks, mom was Hufflepuff but I’m pretty happy with Gryffindor.” Not seeing anyone he knew at the Slytherin table yet, he followed Ashoka to the Gryffindor table on the other side of the Hall. He had gone over the rule book, kind of, but figured sitting with another House wouldn’t be against the rules. No sooner had he sat down next to his friend than he felt a large hand on his shoulder. It was Professor Palpatine, smiling kindly but still with that aura about him that insisted Anakin put space between them.

“My dear boy,” the man continued with a smile that Anakin supposed was meant to be sincere but looked anything but. “You must sit with your own House for meals. I’m afraid you’ll have to wait to see Ms. Tano in class.”

Anakin stood, but asked “I thought it was good to have friends in all Houses. Why can’t we eat where we want to?”

Palpatine didn’t miss a beat though he didn’t hide the flash of annoyance in his features either. Escorting the first year towards the Slytherin table, he replied “Of course you are expected to make friends all over the school, however, your first duty is to your House. It will be imperative that you maintain strong ties with your housemates over the years. Now, I’ll see you in class shortly.” Was it just Anakin or were Slytherins particularly good at swirling their robes out dramatically? He had sudden flashbacks to watching cartoons with Owen on his days off and laughing at the villains who twirled their mustaches. Anakin decided that like most rules, this one was dumb. He took a seat next to Barriss asked if she’d pass the pumpkin juice. “Adults and their rules”, he muttered darkly. Barriss smiled sympathetically.

“Tell me about it. My family is nothing but rules. I almost hoped I’d be in Gryffindor just to see the looks on their faces.”

“Your parents care that much about your House?” Anakin asked, a bit bewildered.

“Of course. You mean your family wasn’t hoping you’d be in Gryffindor?”

“I mean, I don’t have much family. I live with my cousin and he’s a Muggle. I think he was just relieved that I’d be spending the year at boarding school.” He meant it as a joke but in all honesty Owen had been too young to really raise Anakin. It was more like living with an older brother than a real guardian. They had fun but at 23 he hadn’t been prepared to be a single parent to a one year old.

“I’m so sorry, I didn’t realize.” Barriss said sincerely. “I know some of the older families are quite small these days but I didn’t know...I apologize again.”

“Don’t worry about it. Is your family very old?” He was curious about how important certain families seemed to be, and it was dawning that this indeed was a core part of the magical world.

“Oh yes.” She replied with a sigh. “The Offee and Unduli lines are very old. It shouldn’t matter, but it does. Speaking of which, I should go and get everything I need for potions. See you in a bit.”

As she left for the dungeons Anakin was relieved to see Lux, Petro, and Tyzen entering the Hall. He did in fact make a point to talk to Tyzen over breakfast and finally it was time for the first class of the day.

Apparently like House tables during meal times, sitting with your House was expected during classes.
too. Anakin rolled his eyes at how the Houses split between sides of the classroom. Ahsoka seemed to read his mind and stuck her tongue out while Professor Palpatine had his back turned, writing something on the chalkboard. Chalkboard seemed a bit ridiculous for someone who could do magic, but he figured someone that old might just be more comfortable with it.

Settled and eagerly waiting for the chance to do real magic, everyone waited for the Professor to address the class.

“Welcome, welcome,” Palpatine gestured grandly with his arms. “In my classroom you follow all directions to a T. There will be no wands out, no talking that is not about your assignment, and no running late without a note from another Professor. Intent is the most important ingredient in any potion and I will not have you distracted. If you follow my instruction you will learn not just how to make potions, but how to create life saving remedies, brew charisma, create your own luck, and how to stopper death.” He paused for what was clearly dramatic effect. It worked. “Now, page 10 in your textbooks, Burning Bitterroot Balm. This is a basic salve for sprains. Ten points to the best potion at the end of class.”

Anakin was grateful he was working with Tyzen, as less than twenty minutes into class Lux and Petro were arguing over whether or not the Wiggentree root was cut finely enough. Being on a shoestring budget meant cooking for yourself, and Anakin sliced and crushed ingredients easily while Tyzen prioritized them and made sure to constantly stir. By the end of class Lux and Petro had a cauldron emitting a rather foul smell and he and Tyzen were hopeful that their was at least passable. It fit all of the requirements outlined in the text, at least. Palpatine started with the Gryffindor side of the room, making disparaging remarks about everyone’s potions. The Slytherin half of the room didn’t fare much better. Barriss and her partner got a “not too terrible” from their Head of House while Petro and Lux simply got a withering stare. Finally the Professor was in front of Anakin's cauldron. “Ah, excellent consistency, and the smell is right on, not too opaque or too transparent...as expected from the Chosen One, a flawless effort. Ten points to Slytherin.” Not liking being put on the spot, Anakin simply nodded. On his way to return unused ingredients to the storage cabinet he noticed that Ashoka’s potion was identical to his.

Outside the classroom he caught up to her, fuming. “I can’t believe it! Your potion was just as good as mine. Why would he do that?”

Ahsoka forced a half smile as she walked down the hall. “Teachers can be pretty biased towards their Houses I guess. It was rude to go all ‘Chosen One’ on you though. Not like you can help it. Hey, here’s hoping he removes his wand from his ass.”

“How! We have to go to Transfiguration with the Hufflepuffs but meet after dinner by the lake?”

“You’re on,” the Gryffindor replied, heading up the next corridor.

Transfiguration with Professor Jinn was a welcomed change from Potions. Jinn was fair, and even better, he could turn into a dog! The entire class was confused upon entering to find an Irish Wolfhound sitting beside the professor’s desk. When it had turned out to be the professor the class could barely contain their glee. Anakin decided then and there that he was going to figure out how to turn into an animal.

In Charms, Anakin was the first to successfully levitate a feather, however he accidentally managed to levitate his parchment and ink as well. Though Professor Gallia was so impressed she gave 5 points to Slytherin anyway.

The rest of the day’s classes passed quickly and without any more instances of cringeworthy favoritism, but he couldn’t quite shake Palpatine’s actions. If there was one thing he hated, it was
other people trying to control him. And Professor Palpatine seemed to want to set him apart from his friends. He wished he could erase the stupid scar from his face and just prove he was good on his own merit.

He had just finished dinner and was making his way out of the Great Hall and towards the lake when he heard someone calling his name behind him. He turned to see a boy in Hufflepuff robes with neat auburn hair and grey-green eyes. Feeling less than outgoing since contemplating Palpatine’s actions, Anakin waited for the boy to speak. At least this Hufflepuff wasn’t pretending he didn’t know who he was. “Hello, my name’s Obi-Wan Kenobi. I’m your peer tutor for the year.” Relieved and feeling a bit silly, Anakin shook the boy’s hand.

“Nice to meet you.” Anakin smiled. “What are you supposed to be helping me with?”

“Anything you need. Classes, wizarding culture, flying and broomstick technique, it’s your call. We’re supposed to meet once a week for at least an hour.”

“Hm, what about History of Magic? I don’t think Professor Nu likes me very much.”

“Why on earth not?” Obi-wan was curious. The kindly professor was a bit dull in her lectures but not the kind to dislike a student.

“I kept asking questions and I think she was annoyed. But I don’t get it! Why can’t wizards intervene in non-magical conflicts? What if we could save lives? And why doesn’t technology work with magic? The Hogwarts train is magic and it has an engine! Even Lux and Petro were laughing at me, but it doesn’t make sense!”

Obi-wan grinned. He did like a challenge. “She probably just doesn’t know what to do with someone asking questions for a change. Don’t worry. We’ll get it figured out. How about Saturdays after lunch? In the library maybe?”

Relieved that someone didn’t think his questions were ridiculous, Anakin wholeheartedly agreed. Walking out to the lake to meet Ahsoka, he couldn’t wipe the grin from his face. There was something about the Hufflepuff boy he really liked. He knew this was the start of something good.

Chapter End Notes

So after this the pace will pick up. We won’t actually go day by day, I just wanted to get the characters and Houses established. Also my goal is to post 2 chapters a week. Thanks again for reading. Constructive feedback always appreciated.
Saturday dawned as the perfect early fall day. Not that Anakin witnessed dawn. The morning was spent learning Exploding Snap from Tyzen and grabbing a sandwich for lunch before realizing he was almost late to meet Obi-Wan.

He came to a stop outside of the library only slightly out of breath. Obi-Wan was in the hallway with a book propped open in the crook of his elbow. He looked up and greeted Anakin warmly. “Charms and History of Magic then?”

Anakin nodded and followed the Hufflepuff boy into the library. Since it was the weekend Obi-Wan was wearing a simple black pull-over and jeans. Hardly extravagant but outside his uniform, Anakin became self-conscious about his hand-me-down wardrobe. At least it being the first weekend of term meant they had most of the library to themselves.

Obi-Wan pulled out his Charms text from first year and his wand, an elegant light-toned wood, and set up the table neatly. “Right then. Charms is easy enough at first, but loads of students fall behind when it comes to theory, and that can be tough to catch up on. So it’s a good idea to read ahead so you know what you’ll have problems with. You’ve done the basics of levitation, yeah?” Anakin nodded enthusiastically and took out his own wand. It was a dark walnut wand, 11 inches, with a dragon heartstring core. When Ollivander had told him that, he’d been sorely tempted to take it apart and see what a dragon’s heartstring looked like, but the elderly wandsmith seemed to read his mind and warned him that he’d destroy it in the process.

“Wingardium Leviosa!” Anakin demonstrated the charm they’d spent two days working on with Professor Gallia. Obi-Wan beamed.

“Brilliant! Have you started into other levitation spells?”

“Well yeah, but it doesn’t make sense. See,” Anakin pointed to a paragraph outlining the relationship between different levitating charms. “The wand movements are all kind of similar, but the words don’t make sense. Why is there a different charm for levitating a person, one for levitating a plant, and a different one for animals! Why?”

Thinking for a moment, Obi-Wan replied. “It’s a good question. Magic is about intent and will power. The words are different so you can focus on making your intent specific. It makes it easier to cast the spell.”

“But why does it matter if the intent is still to lift something? It’s just as easy to lift a trunk as it is to lift a feather. And for a lot of stuff you don’t even need words.” The Slytherin boy seemed genuinely perplexed and Obi-Wan reminded himself that he hadn’t been raised by a Hogwarts Professor like he had.

“Well, most students have to practice a lot before they can levitate something as heavy as a school trunk. That’s why you start with feather and quills. Though some people have a knack for a certain subject. But what do you mean you don’t need words?”

“You know, like this!” Anakin placed his wand on the table and gestured with his right hand towards the quill. It levitated as easily as if he’d used a wand and incantation. Gobsmacked, Obi-
Wan could only follow the quill as it continued toward the vaulted ceiling. He’d seen Qui-Gon do one or two things without a wand like stir his tea, but never a show of so much power.

“Anakin,” he said, still watching the quill, “how are you doing that?”

Looking at Obi-Wan broke his concentration and the quill fell to the table. “Can’t everyone do that? I mean it’s almost easier than with a wand. I did way weirder stuff that I didn’t even know was magic before I got here.”

“I promise you, not everyone can do that. Not even most full grown witches and wizards. Wandless magic is very rare. We all do things when we’re young and scared or angry. It’s like a defense mechanism for wizarding children. But that typically stops after we get wands and start focusing and using our magic. That is...well it’s incredible.” The Hufflepuff grinned widely, his eyes somehow more green than grey, Anakin noticed. He decided he liked it when Obi-Wan smiled like that.

“I didn’t know that wasn’t normal. I just...connect with the magic around it. Ask it to do what I want. And there’s so much magic here.”

“You can, you can feel magic?” Obi-Wan was sure he was going to have to pick his jaw up off the floor before this session was over.

“Well, yeah, it’s everywhere, but some places have more of it, or it feels different in other places. It’s kinda hard to explain.” Anakin was suddenly a bit nervous and wasn’t sure why.

Smiling gently Obi-Wan replied “Don’t worry. You don’t have to explain it. But it is pretty wicked.”

At ease again, the boys resumed revising for Charms and History of Magic. Anakin announced his intention to one day combine magic and technology, and neither realized that they’d spent nearly the entire afternoon talking and trying to create their own charm for paper airplanes. By the time they were thrown out on their ears by the librarian, they were doubled over laughing.

“Hey Skywalker!” a voice boomed out. He and Obi-Wan were walking down a corridor and stopped abruptly. From around the corner came two large sixth year Gryffindor boys. Anakin recognized one as Krell and thought the other’s last name was Viszla. “Some nerve you have, walking around like a messiah after you get put in Slytherin. Your mom dying not enough for you to stay away from snakes?”

Anakin knew he had a temper, but he felt himself go from happy to seeing red very quickly. No one talked about his family. “And you, Kenobi? Hanging out with that freak voluntarily? Maybe you’re a traitor too.”

Obi-Wan put his hand on Anakin’s shoulder and stood up tall. “Aren’t you two a little old to be picking fights with people half your size? Now would be a good time to leave.”

Viszla grinned nastily. “You gonna make us? Or call on your precious Professor?” The thinner boy reached for his wand. Anakin realized he was about to hex Obi-Wan, as he was bigger and so more of a threat. Before he could think about it, Anakin had reached out with his mind and pulled magic up around himself. He pushed out with his hand as hard as he could, and Viszla went flying into the wall. Anakin turned his attention to Krell.

“You had better run!” He yelled out, and made a show to lunge at Krell. However Krell was either brave or not particularly bright, because he had his wand out already. Luckily Obi-Wan had used the distraction with Viszla and had his wand at the ready as well. A strong “Expelliarmus!” by the Hufflepuff boy and Krell was defenseless. Scrambling for his wand, he turned and ran, leaving the unconscious Pre Viszla behind.
Of course that was when a Professor decided to make an appearance. “Skywalker! Kenobi!” Professor Windu shouted. “What on earth is the meaning of this?”

Anakin stared. Obi-Wan found his voice first. “They started it sir! We-”

“Forget I asked,” the Head of Gryffindor interrupted. “Headmaster. Now. Both of you.” The boys followed through several corridors until they came to a statue of a large gargoyle. The Professor stood in front of it and with a reluctant grimace mumbled “sherbet”. The gargoyle slid to the side, revealing a spiral staircase. Anakin and Obi-Wan were ushered up until they came to a small room with an ancient looking desk and walls covered in portraits.

Headmaster Yoda sat behind the desk, wearing a hat that looked almost as tall as he was and dark green robes. “Headmaster,” Professor Windu began, “I found these two dueling in the corridors. I’m going to check on the other boys involved.” The Headmaster nodded as Professor Windu left the three of them alone in the office.

The elderly man eyed them calmly, his accent only dimly noticeable in his measured tones. “This a serious offense. Fighting in the corridors during the first week of school. Tell me, why did this happen?”

Anakin spoke first. “Those boys cornered us! They were way bigger and they had their wands out. I got scared. I didn’t mean to hurt anyone, it just happened! Then Obi-Wan got the other one, and he didn’t hurt him, he just made him drop the wand! I was the only one who did anything bad.” The words tumbled out but Anakin didn’t care. He didn’t want his new friend to think he would turn him in. And those other kids had started it.

“Hm,” the Headmaster tapped what Anakin realized was a gnarled walking stick against the floor. “And young mister Kenobi, you agree with this interpretation?”

“Yes, sir. I mean, it happened so fast. But Krell insulted Anakin’s mum, and then Viszla had his wand out, and Anakin was just trying to protect us. He didn’t mean to hurt him. And then I used Expelliarmus and then Professor Windu was there.”

Looking at the two now-deflated boys, the Headmaster sighed. “For both of you, detention. One night. Next Friday. Mister Kenobi, while magic is not allowed in the corridors, I expect you that you will be attending Dueling Club this year, assuming no more detentions, yes?”

The auburn-haired boy flushed and nodded emphatically.

“Good. Back to your dorm, then.” Obi-Wan nodded at Anakin, trying to convey his silent ‘good luck’.

With just the two of them left Anakin became extremely uncomfortable. The Headmaster’s unwavering stare didn’t help matters.

“Wandless magic, hm? Very rare, young Skywalker. Very rare indeed.” The tap-tap of the walking stick filled the room.

How did he know that? Anakin supposed there wasn’t much that happened in the castle that the Headmaster didn’t know about though.

“Rare, and powerful. Your connection to magic is a gift. But now you see how dangerous it can be as well. Raw magic like that can hurt people very easily. We are lucky that mister Viszla was only bruised. You must be very careful with it. Do you understand?”
“Yessir! I...I won’t get so angry. I’ll try to be careful.” Stepping away from his anger at the older bullies, Anakin did feel badly about hurting someone. He had known first hand that fights with much larger kids rarely ended well, and his need to protect himself and Obi-Wan had run high.

“Hm,” the Headmaster nodded again. “You need practice. And guidance. The duties of a Headmaster leave me with precious little time. However Professor Jinn is also very powerful. You will train with him. Twice a week, young Skywalker. You must control your emotions and your magic. Are we agreed? I want no more reports of fighting.”

Relief flowed through Anakin and he nodded emphatically. One detention and and time with the friendly Transfigurations professor was much better than the scenarios involving expulsion or monsters in the forest he’d been imagining.

“You will start with meditation. Speak with Professor Jinn after your next Transfigurations class and set up a schedule with him. You must attend, and only when he says so may you stop.”

The Headmaster dismissed him and Anakin made his way back to his dorm to get his bearings before dinner. He was grateful to not run into any professor or students looking for trouble.

The same could not be said about dinner. As soon as he sat down Lux started asking questions about the fight. “Did you really take out three sixth years by yourself? The whole school’s talking about it!”

Anakin rolled his eyes. “No, I didn’t. There were two of them and Obi-Wan was there. I didn’t do it alone.”

Lux raised his eyebrows. “That Hufflepuff kid who’s a bit ginger? Really? Wouldn’t have thought he’d be good in a fight. Or that any Hufflepuff would be, really.”

“Well he is. He’s really good. Yoda even asked him to be in the Dueling Club.” Anakin was a bit insulted on his friend’s behalf. House politics were so strange to him.

“Wicked! But is the other part true?” Lux glanced around conspiratorially with wide eyes. “That you can do magic without a wand?”

Dropping his face into his hands, Anakin nodded. He really didn’t want to discuss this right now. It was one thing to always feel like a freak in the world outside Hogwarts. But he wasn’t sure if he could take being a freak in the magical world as well.

Thankfully Tyzen realized the other Slytherin boy wasn’t exactly enjoying the stares from around the Great Hall or the conversation and cut in. “Hey, enough with the rumors. Let’s do something worthwhile. Exploding Snap tournament in the common room. We bet with chocolate frogs.” Anakin could have hugged him.

Barriss looked up from her book. “Tournament? Boys, I’m in. Bring your game faces.” She smirked at the group and soon they were all headed back to the common room. Anakin thought that he was now really grateful to be in Slytherin. Even if Lux and Petro could be snobs sometimes, they were there for him. Tyzen’s quiet intuition and Bariss’ aloof charm were always appreciated anyway.

They were almost back to the dorm when a pretty Ravenclaw girl stepped out of the Potions lab in front of them. She stopped when she noticed Anakin and introduced herself quickly. “I’m Padmé,” she said. “Can I talk to you about um, earlier today? It’ll be quick, I promise.”

Noting her book clutched to her chest Anakin figured she wasn’t looking for fight. He nodded to his friends to go on without him.
“Thank you,” she said, large hazel eyes reflecting torch light. “I just wanted to apologize. For Pre, I mean. We’re cousins. We hate each other, but we’re still cousins. I don’t know what he was thinking attacking a first year like that. There’s no excuse for it. And...I’m so sorry.”

Anakin relaxed and smiled slightly. “It’s ok. I didn’t mean to hurt him like I did either.”

“I know Obi-Wan was worried about you, so if he likes you then you must be alright.” said Padmé smiling genuinely now.

“You know Obi-Wan?”

“We’re friends. I was his tutor last year. He’s a good person and it’s not the first time that Pre and Krell have ganged up on someone. If you ever need help with defensive spells, let me know.” She winked. “Obi-Wan isn’t the only one in Duel Club. Have a good night.”

Grinning, Anakin headed to his dorm determined to win at least a respectable number of Exploding Snap games. If putting up with bullies and Palpatine was the price he had to pay for being friends with people like Ahsoka, Obi-Wan, Padmé, and his Slytherin year mates, it was more than worth it.

Chapter End Notes

Next time: More meddling from Palpatine. Ashoka is having none of your shit. Never mess with a Hufflepuff who has a Slytherin BFF. Mace Windu did not sign up for this.
“My dear boy.” Anakin could barely stop the cringe he wanted to display at those words. Potions was just letting out and Palpatine was cloying as ever. “Please stay for a moment, if you don’t mind.” Seeing as the man already had his hand on Anakin’s shoulder he didn’t have much of a choice. After everyone else had cleared out the aging Professor rounded on him.

“I of course heard about that awful business with those Gryffindor boys” he tsked to himself, shaking his head slowly. “Of course were it up to me, you’d not have received any punishment. What those brutes were thinking...I can’t imagine. However, your ability to deter them is of interest. Tell me, how exactly did you do it?”

Unconsciously taking a step back towards the door, Anakin swallowed. It wasn’t like half the school wasn’t talking about a first year who could do wandless magic. He’d shown his dorm mates, after a bit of badgering from Lux and Petro, if only to stop them from asking. His Head of House likely would be interested, but to what end was the question.

“Uh, mostly Obi-Wan, really. And luck. It um, it happened so fast.”

The door to the potions room slammed open as Ashoka nearly sommer saulted into the classroom.

“Sorry! Nearly forgot my notes for next class. Anakin, are you ok? You look a bit off.”

He owed the Gryffindor girl big time. “Yeah! I mean yes, I do feel a bit off. Excuse me, Professor, I can’t be late for next class.”

“Of course, yes, yes. Do try not to be so forgetful in the future, Ms. Tano” the Potions Master trailed off.

He darted down the dungeon corridors with Ashoka, not stopping until they reached the moving staircase. “That guy is so creepy” said the girl, swing her braids behind her shoulder. “Honestly, what is his deal with you?”

“I don’t know, but I don’t think it’s anything good,” replied Anakin. He was decent enough at potions but nothing that warranted the older wizard doting on him like a grandfather. It was more than a bit eerie. “Nice save with leaving your notebook behind though.” He grinned at his friend.

“Friends don’t leave friends in stranger danger,” Ashoka nodded solemnly before cracking her own smile in return.

With a tight hug they parted for their respective classes after making plans for their normal study session by the lake that evening.

At least Transfiguration that afternoon went well. Anakin managed to turn his matchstick into a needle and back again and only earned a modest 5 points for Slytherin. Afterwards Professor Jinn spoke to him about setting up practice times. Anakin realized what exact opposites Jinn and Palpatine seemed to be. Where the Potions Master was invasive and artificial, Jinn was concerned but professional, warm but not suffocating. Anakin found himself slightly envious of Obi-Wan who got to live with the man. It was decided that Tuesday and Thursday evenings Anakin would spend an
hour with the Transfigurations Professor, working on his control of wandless magic. A large part of him resented having to do extra work, but when he thought about hurting someone without meaning to, maybe even somebody he like next time, he understood.

As classes ended for the day he gathered the books he’d need for time with Ahsoka and headed down for dinner. Of course, given that tomorrow Herbology was cancelled for flying lessons, he didn’t expect her to be fully focused on studying. Ahsoka loved Quidditch and all things to do with flying, and Anakin admitted he was thrilled about the idea of being in the sky. It seemed like an ultimate kind of freedom. As Anakin took a seat at the House table Petro frowned at his books.

“Why bother studying when you know you could make soup in your cauldron and Palpatine would pass you?”

Anakin rolled his eyes at the dark haired boy. “Because understanding the theory is what’s important. Just because you can ride a bike doesn’t mean you can build one. Besides, Ahsoka’s helping me with History of Magic.”

“You like her or something?” the other Slytherin teased.

Anakin wondered if you could sprain something by rolling your eyes too hard. “She’s my friend. And if she heard you say that, she’d kick your ass.” He grinned and pulled the shepherd’s pie towards his plate.

Petro seemed to consider this and didn’t press the issue. Ahsoka was impulsive and her spells often came out rather more powerful than intended. During their Slytherin/Gryffindor DADA classes, Anakin was sure they’d be banned from partnering up soon. Professor Windu had already had his robes singed twice due to their tendency to spar rather than practice spells.

Dinner wrapped up and Anakin headed towards the lake with Tyzen, who was looking for some help with Potions as well. When they reached the spot by the lakeshore that he thought of as ‘theirs’ Anakin noticed that Obi-Wan and Padmé were sitting by Ahsoka as well.

“Hi,” Obi-Wan started. “Hope you don’t mind. Just wanted to make sure you were ok after Saturday.”

“Of course not. Hi, Padmé.” The Ravenclaw girl smiled and waved.

“They said they had some free time so I figured they could help us,” said Ahsoka, loosening her red and gold tie. “Don’t tell Palpatine you’re thinking like that. He might start holding you after class too.” Anakin teased.

Ahsoka stuck out her tongue good-naturedly. They settled into a good rhythm of revising potions notes while Obi-Wan gave tips on structuring essaying and Padmé looked up from her own notes to help the younger students with more detailed questions. Eventually Barriss came by, followed by Ahsoka’s housemate Rex and his twin Cody, and finally Padmé’s sister Sola. As dark approached Padmé had conjured blue fire that emitted warmth through its glass container and talk had long since stopped focusing on school.

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The next morning found first year Gryffindors and Slytherins anxiously waiting on the Quidditch pitch for their first flying lesson. Ahsoka and Anakin were ecstatic while Lux and Petro had spent the walk out to the pitch bragging about how they already knew everything about flying and hoped the
school brooms weren’t too out of date. Madame Tachi, the flying instructor, approached the group while carrying an armful of brooms.

“Pass them down, pass them down” she said as she divested her burden onto her students. Once everyone had a broom lying on their left side, the instructor stood up straight. “Flying is not some simple trick” she stated. “The amount of muscle coordination need to keep a broom in its intended direction, especially during nasty weather, is no small feat. However, I know most of you are chomping at the bit, so extend your left hand over your broom and command it. ‘Up!’” Anakin was pleased when the broom immediately went to his hand. Ahsoka had similar success, with only a few students having issues. Determined not to be outdone, Lux was hovering on his broom already. “Mr. Bonteri!” the flying coach yelled. “I have not instructed you to mount yet!” Grinning, Lux made a show of stretching his feet towards the grass. However, Petro had mounted his broom as well in attempt to prove himself his cousin’s equal, and in a moment of nerves kicked off from the ground and into Lux, launching them both into opposite trajectories on their brooms.

Seeing two students both clearly unstable on brooms, Rex Fett had somehow decided that he could fix the situation, and took off after Lux, intent on bringing him back. “Mr. Fett!” Professor Tachi was obviously displeased with the class devolving into chaos without so much as a second command. As Rex grabbed onto Lux’s ankle, both of them averaging fifteen feet or so above ground, Petro had continued to climb. His fear had overtaken any previous training and the Slytherin boy continued on an uneven path up towards one of the quaffle goals.

Exchanging a look with Anakin and rolling her eyes at the former’s hopelessness, Ahsoka kicked off after Petro. She had a brief moment to wonder why the instructor wasn’t doing anything about the free-floating boy before she found herself grabbing his shoulder in a steadying move.

Anakin realized he was starting to pity himself in all of the confusion for not knowing how to fly. If there was a single emotion he had no use for, it was pity. Setting his face resolutely and ignoring instructor Tachi’s frantic yells, he pushed off the ground, soaring towards Ahsoka and Petro. Ahsoka had a death grip on the anxious Petro at this point, and was in the process of being nearly hauled off her own broom. Anakin didn’t think and let instinct take over. He grasped Ahsoka’s forearm, looked her in the eye and nodded towards the ground, then pointed his broom towards the patch of grass they’d all been on minutes earlier and sped for it, pulling out of a dive at the last second. His friend and Petro hit the ground out of the swan dive, and seconds later Rex and Lux followed. Anakin sped along the ground on his legs before rolling into a graceful tumble.

Professor Tachi was beside herself. “Are you all incapable of following the most basic of directions?” she yelled before pulling herself together. “Never have I...teaching Gryffindor and Slytherin together, honestly.” She was now muttering, coming close to cursing her students. “Headmaster’s office for you two.” Pointing at Lux and Petro, the boys slunk off towards the castle. “And you three!” she rounded on Ahsoka, Rex, and Anakin. “No more of these stunts, ever!” She took several deep breaths. “However,” she puffed her bangs out of her face, “should any of you be interested, Quidditch tryouts will be arranged this week and you have permission to participate. Please see your respective heads of house if you have any interest.” Huffing and straightening her robes, the blonde woman attempted to take control of her first years back.

After their proper lesson, during which Anakin and Ahsoka had both excelled, Anakin broached the issue with her. “Quidditch? I thought first years weren’t allowed?”

Ahsoka huffed. “We’re not, generally. But well, you were rather good. And Rex and I did get your housemates back. Maybe she thinks we could do it.” Anakin pondered the idea. He had loved flying. Being up in the air was the greatest thing he’d felt well, ever. However the idea of going to Palpatine for anything still fueled him with unease.
That night at dinner he was still considering the idea. He noticed a bit absently that Professor Windu and Professor Tachi seemed to be laughing over the same thing at the head table. He assumed it was that both of them had the misfortune of teaching a double Slytherin/Gryffindor class that day. When Professor Windu put his hand over Instructor Tachi’s Anakin immediate retreated to the idea of “adults are gross” and considered what a Quidditch position could mean for him. Before he’d had much time to contemplate, Professor Palpatine approached him. “Ah, Mr. Skywalker. Instructor Tachi did mention to me your skills on the pitch this morning. I’m quite sure I could make a point to inform Ms. Unduli of your aptitude. As Slytherin’s Quidditch Captain she’s always looking for new talent.” The Potions Master glided off before waiting for a response from Anakin, leaving the boy more confused than he’d been a moment earlier.

Heading out of the Great Hall, he spotted Obi-Wan up ahead. He darted forward and tugged on his friends robes until he caught his attention. “Anakin! What’s wrong?”

Anakin nodded in the direction of the library and thankfully the older boy caught on. Upon reaching a secluded area Anakin opened up. “Flying lessons were crazy! And because I dragged a couple people back down, Palpatine wants me to play for Slytherin! But I hate him!” Anakin was practically panting after unloading at his friend.

Obi-Wan looked a bit taken aback but thoughtful all the same. “Well, that is quite an honor. You could make a point of trying out instead of just taking a spot that Professor Palpatine offers. Or if you don’t want to do it, don’t.” Obi-Wan shrugged.

Anakin sighed in frustration. “You make it sound so easy,” he pouted.

Obi-Wan smiled and put his hands on Anakin’s shoulders. “It is that easy. If you don’t like how Professor Palpatine does things, then do them your way. He can’t force you to be on the Quidditch team. It’s up to you. And trying out seems a bit more fair than just taking a spot on the team.”

“Hufflepuff,” Anakin said good-naturedly.

“Snake.” Obi-Wan lightly shoved his friend back, grinning. “C’mon, let’s get going before someone realizes we’re not looking for books.”

On Obi-Wan’s advice, Anakin made a point of talking to Luminara the next morning at breakfast. The sixth year girl was more than happy to let Anakin know tryouts would be that Saturday at 9am, and to have in mind the two positions he wanted to try out for. Barriss made a sarcastic quip about the predictability of the Chosen One going for Quidditch in his first year, but as Barriss went it was fairly mild. At least she was talking to him, unlike Lux and Petro who were quietly ignoring him. Anakin figured it wasn’t his fault that they had nearly drifted off grounds. Tyzen didn’t seem to hold with their nonsense either, thankfully.

Finally it was Friday, and at lunch both Anakin and Obi-Wan received owls informing them to meet Professor Windu after dinner in the DADA classroom. Anakin made a point of waiting for his Hufflepuff mentor at before heading up to the Professor’s classroom. On his way there he asked Obi-Wan what he supposed their punishment would be. Unfortunately the older boy was at a loss. “I’ve um, never had detention before,” he said, looking at the floor.

Anakin immediately felt awful. Obi-Wan had gone an entire school year with no screw ups, and on his first week, Anakin had managed to get him into trouble.

“Don’t worry,” the auburn-haired boy grinned. “It’s doing wonders for my street cred.”

Anakin let out an undignified snort.
“Gentlemen,” came the baritone of Professor Windu. “Right on time, as you should be for detention.” They dropped their bags at the entrance and stood in front of the dark skinned professor. “The fourth year students have been studying grindylows. As they prefer wet, seaweed-filled dens, you will have the honor of clearing out the cages they’ve been in. No magic, only your hands and sponges. Ten cages each. If you finish before midnight, I’ll know you haven’t done a thorough job.” Professor Windu took a seat and propped his feet up on his desk, gesturing to the buckets and sponges on either side of the room. “Ten each. No talking. Start...now.” He made a grand gesture of straightening out his copy of The Daily Prophet.

Hours later, when Anakin was sure his hands would forever smell like seaweed and what he refused to officially label as grindylow droppings, the DADA Professor stood and stretched. “I’m going to the staff lounge for more tea. If I even think you’ve been talking when I get back, these cages will be the best part of your night.” He strode out of the room purposefully. Anakin silently thought he could give most Slytherins a run for their dramatic robe twirls. On a half-mad impulse Anakin tossed his sponge at the back of Obi-Wan’s head. The boy looked over scandalized, until he realized he had the tactical advantage. He soaked both sponges and lobbed them with surprising speed at Anakin who could only dodge one. Anakin knew what this meant. War. No holds barred aggression. He lobbed one sponge at Obi-Wan in a feint, immediately followed by a much faster throw. Obi-Wan had attempted a dodge roll, but still ended up with the second sponge hitting him squarely in the chest. His counter strike was effective though, corning Anakin between two cages while he barely contained his laughter.

Obi-Wan had rolled into a crouch by the classroom entrance, and almost as if in slow-motion, Anakin lobbed both sponges at his friend, just as the professor was entering the room with a fresh mug of tea. Lacking a wand and running on instinct, Anakin saw the professor notice the sponges mid-flight as his eyes became impossibly large. Anakin reached out through the magic he could always feel and pulled desperately at the sponges. However he must have pulled a bit too desperately because instead of coming back they disappeared entirely. The two boys were left silently praying that their professor wouldn’t come to the correct and very obvious conclusion that they had been chucking wet sponges at each other.

The imposing professor took a deep breath. “Skywalker,” he said too calmly. “What on earth, was that?”

Anakin wasn’t sure what ‘that’ meant. “I uh, didn’t want you to get hit. I mean, it was my fault, Obi-Wan didn’t do anything! I was being stupid and I threw the-then you walked in and I...pulled too hard. Sorry, sir.”

Professor Windu slowly set his mug on his desk. “Did you just banish objects without a wand, Skywalker?” The man’s control of his features was eerie.

“Yes, sir? I mean I think so, sir. I didn’t mean to. I just wanted to stop them.” Anakin figured he should be looking at the floor but his professor was turning an interesting shade of dark purple.

“Skywalker, Kenobi...” he took in the wet state of their robes and the trails of suds all over the classroom. “It’s late, just go. No more fights, no more...go. Two feet of parchment on my desk Monday morning on why magic in the corridors is dangerous.” The Professor sighed and muttered something to himself. Not questioning the order, the boys grabbed their bags and hurried out of the classroom. They were by the kitchens when they finally broke down in laughter.

“Did you see him?!” Anakin said. “I thought he was going to explode! Or murder me.”

Obi-Wan agreed that he’d never seen the DADA Professor quite like that. “Hang on,” said the Hufflepuff boy. “Are you hungry at all?”
Anakin nodded. They had at least cleaned out most of the grindylow cages and the effort had left him famished.

“Ok,” said Obi-Wan. “I’m about to show you the best-kept Hufflepuff secret, so don’t tell anyone, right?”

“Of course not!” the Slytherin agreed.

Obi-Wan made a show of checking each entrance of the corridor but as it was nearly eleven no one else was about. He leaned into the still life portrait of the giant pear and tickled both its sides. Miraculously, the portrait swung back and Anakin followed Obi-Wan into the school kitchens.

Several house elves were about preparing for the next day’s meal and Anakin realized he’d never considered how the entire school and faculty were fed every day.

“Master Obi-Wan is here!” exclaimed a house elf running up to them.

“Hello, Winky.” The Hufflepuff smiled. “Could we get two of whatever smells so good?”

Winky puffed his chest out with pride. “Of course! Winky will bring it right to you!”

They sat at a table that was slightly too small for them but neither minded. Winky appeared with with two bowls of a thick stew and two pastries with strawberry frosting. “Winky, this is my friend Anakin.” Anakin stuck his hand out and the house elf seemed elated to shake it. Even more so when Anakin thanked him for making food for the school all the time.

“Is Qui-Gon helping you with controlling your magic?” asked Obi-Wan around mouthfuls of stew.

“Yes. Well, I think so. So far all we’ve done is meditate but I’m not very good at it. It’s so boring and it get distracted all the time.”

“I wasn’t good at it at first, either.” Obi-Wan replied with a soft half-smile. “I was angry all the time. But you’ll get better.”

“Angry about what?” the Slytherin’s curiosity was peaked.

“Well, not having my mum and dad mostly. Qui-Gon was a friend of our family but I hated that he was raising me instead of my parents. I mean I hardly remembered them. I was practically still a baby when the Dark Lord- But I had so much anger as I got older. Anyway, I’m sure you’re not the worst students he’s had by far.” The half smile no longer reached Obi-Wan’s eyes.

Anakin stood and walked around to sit next to his friend, enveloping him in an awkward hug the way Owen would if it had been a long day and he knew he was thinking about Shmi. Anakin knew that he perhaps more than anyone understood Obi-Wan’s anger.

Obi-Wan nodded and leaned into his friend. He murmured into his friend’s shoulder. Realizing the smaller boy’s robes were damp and rather smelled of seaweed, Obi-Wan broke the hug to suggest they shower and turn in. Winky waved them off with an invitation to come back any time and both boys were asleep in their respective beds before they knew it.

Chapter End Notes
Next chapter will skip forward a good bit as I'm hoping to round out Anakin's first year before too long. Comments and feedback always appreciated! Thanks again for reading <3
Winter was taking hold of Hogwarts grounds and most days a thin layer of snow dusted nearly everything. Even parts off the lake were starting to develop fragile ice patches in shadier areas. The winds were frequently brutal in mid-November and most students spent free time in their dorms around crackling fireplaces or in the library huddled around tables.

Except for quidditch players. Anakin almost regretted having ever approached tryouts. If Ahsoka and Obi-Wan hadn’t also tried out, he wondered if he’d have ever done it. He loved flying but the cold was almost unbearable. He kept losing focus on what Luminara was saying while pulling magic around himself for some brief moments of warmth. Finally Luminara whacked his shins with her broom. “Honestly, use a hot air charm,” his Captain said, pulling out her wand. “Here. Caeliflagra!” Suddenly his robes were quite warm.

“Brilliant!” Anakin said relieved.

“Now, again. Chasers need need to coordinate. Fly as a unit, always know where the other chasers are. Anakin, I know you’re fast but if you don’t know where Bruck or Aalto are, we can’t have a cohesive scoring team. Understood?”

Anakin nodded. It wasn’t just that Bruck and Aalto weren’t as agile as other chasers, it was that they particularly didn’t like him. Anakin had tried out for both Seeker and Chaser, and while Professor Palpatine had practically insisted he be Seeker, he didn’t want to displace a perfectly good player when there was an opening for a Chaser. Besides, Seeker sounded glamorous, but waiting around for the Snitch when he could be actively dodging bludgers and making plays sounded dull in comparison. And he had taken Obi-Wan’s advice and gotten the position fair and square. Ahsoka on the other hand could turn flying into an act of acrobatic prowess. As Gryffindor’s new Seeker, he couldn’t wait to play against her in a real match. Rex had also made Beater for Gryffindor and had already taken out a Ravenclaw chaser in the first match of the year.

The second match of the season, the last one before Christmas holidays was approaching. It was to be a Slytherin v. Ravenclaw match, and it was less than two weeks away.

“Next practice is Saturday morning, bright and early at 8am.” Luminara stated, ignoring the groans. “You may not like it, but we will be ready for this game. Now hit the showers and be read to practice those coordinated maneuvers on Saturday.”

Heading through the snow to the showers Anakin stored his school issue broom in his locker. Taking off his quidditch kit, Bruck and Aalto approached him on either side. The third year boys were trying to be intimidating, but after word had spread of Anakin’s talent for wandless magic, most people knew it wasn’t wise to start anything with him. “Heard you're friends with that Hufflepuff, Oafy or whatever. Word to the wise, Slytherins don’t make friends with Hufflepuffs. Those weak-minded squibs aren’t worth it.” Bruck said, tossing is blond hair out of his eyes with a smirk.

“Yeah, “ Aalto chimed in. “Would do you some good to hang out with your own kind.”

Anakin huffed and shut his locker. “Oh, you mean people who hang out with lackeys because their rich parents tell them to? I’d rather have real friends, thanks.” He made to back out of the locker room but the third years were having none of it, still flanking him on either side.
“Think you’re better than us, then?” Bruck leaned down menacingly. Anakin’s wand was lying in his robe pocket on the bench behind him. Reaching through his sense of magic he extended his hand and pulled it to him, now holding eleven inches of walnut. “I’m not better than anyone. But I know who bullies are and if you hurt me or my friends, you’ll regret it.” He could feel the magic pulsing around him, responding to his anger, almost begging him to reach out. He focused on his breath like Professor Jinn had taught him, focused on pushing a sense of calm that started in his center and moved out through his body.

Bruck and Aalto seemed at least smart enough not to try something with the boy who had sent a sixth year prefect to Madame Che’s healing wing, and left the room, turning back to glare at Anakin.

The boy sighed and sat on the bench. He knew members of his own House were increasingly finding reasons to dislike him. He was raised by a Muggle, his best friends were in different Houses, and the incident with Krell and Viszla aside, he heard the whispers in the common room between students wondering if he was really supposed to be in Slytherin. And he did like his House. But so much of it seemed...broken. Students playing at complicated social politics foisted upon them by parents, everyone thinking about making the “right” connections, complementing the “right” people and shunning the rest. A House build on ambition should be more than that.

Gathering his robes and bag up and pocketing his wand, Anakin made his way back to the castle. He had over a foot left on his essay for DADA and meditation techniques to practice before meeting with Professor Jinn tomorrow. Thankfully the Slytherin common room was usually quiet. He grabbed a spot by the fire and tried to focus on the strengths and weaknesses 17th century curses, but his mind kept drifting back to how out of balance his House seemed.

The next day was Thursday and Anakin couldn’t wait for Defense Against the Dark Arts. They’d finally get to learn some dueling spells besides defensive ones. He and Ahsoka had mastered Protego and Expelliarmus (and only destroyed a couple things in Professor Windu’s classroom) and were looking forward to learning offense. Upon entering the room, all the desks had been moved against the walls and plush mats had been laid out in the center of the floor.

“Place your bags on the desks, please.” Professor Windu called out. All you need today is your wands, assuming you read the assigned chapter last night. If you didn’t, you will not have a fun time today.” A couple students shot nervous looks at each other.

Anakin and Ahsoka smirked. They were well-prepared for this. After being instructed to pair up, Anakin and Ahsoka took a mat near the back of the room. Professor Windu tried not to grimace as the two partnered up. He wasn’t one of those professors who discouraged inter-house friendships, but two of the most hot-headed and powerful students working together tended to result in damaged walls and broken objects. He stashed his favorite mug under his desk just in case.

“Now, today we’ll be working on basic jinxes and curses. As I know you’ve all read the theory and wand movements for the stunning and leg-locker curses, and the stinging hex, I know that you will practice control and movement, and NOT focus on hurling a spell as hard as you can like a child who’s holding a wand for the first time. Partners on the left side of the room will be defending using Protego.” Ahsoka looked a bit disappointed at this. “Partners on the right will start with the leg locking curse. I have basic bruise balm here, and if anyone needs attention beyond that, I will have serious questions as to why. Now, begin!”

Anakin stood up straight and remembered everything he could from the text. Stance with dominant foot slightly in front of left foot, hips centered, shoulders straight. Ashoka was in defensive stance and nodded that she was ready, her willow wand already out. With a circular motion and a right angle swish, he said “Locomotor Mortis!” in a calm but commanding tone.
Ahsoka was faster, her Protego shield deflecting the curse easily.

“Five points to Gryffindor, Ms. Tano, excellent work!” Ahsoka beamed. It wasn’t often that the DADA Professor gave out praise.

Anakin grinned and assumed the offensive stance again. Centering his breath he focused on the magic around him, on his wand arm the extension of himself that was his wand. “Locomotor Mortis!” He said again. Ahsoka had a Protego shield up, but it was weaker than her last one and his spell broke through. The Gryffindor girl fell to the floor as her legs became locked beneath her.

“Finite Incantatem!” Anakin said, releasing his friend. She looked up grinning.

“I could practically feel how strong that was! I can’t wait til it’s my turn.”

On the mat next to them Petro and Lux weren’t having as much luck. Petro’s curse seemed to only make it slightly more inconvenient for Lux to walk and and Lux was slow to bring up his shields. Tyzen and Barriss were faring better with Barriss having mastered the curse but preferring to physically dodge instead of magically shield her partner’s curse. Anakin noted that she’d make a much better Chaser than Bruck or Aalto. As class wore on Anakin and Ahsoka had both broken a sweat trying to out shield and out curse each other, Anakin falling a few times and Ahsoka perfecting her own version of shielding in tandem with Barriss’ rolls and dodges.

“Alright, wands down!” Professor Windu called. “Most of you have shown a proficiency with the basics, but if you’re having trouble, please see me to set up a practice time. Shielding and basic cursing will be on the end of term exam! And I do not want you practicing offensive spells anywhere except under a Professor’s supervision. And Ms. Tano,” the intimidating Professor called as everyone was headed to the door. “I hope to see those reflexes at the match after break.” He said with a half smile.

“Yes sir!” she called, exiting with Anakin.

“Ha, I'm not the only one who has a teacher playing favorites,” smiled Anakin smugly.

Ahsoka bumped him with her shoulder. “Hey, I was being praised for my raw talent.”

Anakin snorted. “And you’re modest about it too.”

“Are you going to see Professor Jinn before dinner?” the Gryffindor girl asked.

“Yeah, biweekly meditation session. Still not very good at it though.” he huffed.

“Your control is much better though. You’re not getting random objects or people wrapped up in your spells. I know the staff must appreciate not losing so many supplies.” she grinned.

“Heh, true. See you tomorrow? We can find an abandoned classroom to study in.”

“You’re on! See you then.” She nudged him one more time and headed off to the Gryffindor tower.

Anakin did enjoy his time with Professor Jinn, but he didn’t see how was ever supposed to be as collected as the Transfigurations Professor. The man seemed to be the embodiment of calm and Anakin sometimes felt as though there was fire in his veins, waiting to be let out.

The transfiguration classroom looked the same as always. Wooden desks, the ancient looking professor’s desk in front made of gnarled dark wood, large white candles to supplement the meager amounts of sunlight that came through the windows in November. And the small grey cushions in the corner where they meditated. Except this time there were three cushions instead of two. Professor
Jinn entered the room, Obi-Wan right behind him.

“Hello, Anakin. You’ve been doing very well with focusing your magic through breath and meditation lately. I thought today we could try something different. Would you mind if Obi-Wan joined us?” The Professor smiled benignly, dark eyes sparkling.

“Oh course not,” Anakin grinned at his friend. He set his bag down where Obi-Wan placed his, and they both removed their outer school robes as they were a bit warm for the room.

Professor Jinn closed the door and sat on the cushion in the corner, Anakin on his right Obi-Wan on his left, forming a triangle.

“Now, take a few minutes, eyes closed, palms on your knees and legs folded. Let all of the day’s achievements and struggles enter your mind, be acknowledged, and pass from your conscious mind. Think of them like falling rain drops or clouds in the sky. There and then gone, part of an ever changing scene.”

The familiar intro put Anakin at ease and he allowed his concerns and thoughts from the day to be acknowledged and then let go, passing through him as air from his body. After a few moments Professor Jinn said in calm tones, “Now that your are relaxed, know that every witch or wizard has a presence in magic. All of us move through magic, we use it, but we are also part of it. Anakin, you can feel it around you, but do not think of it as an external force. It's an all encompassing energy that flows through you and connects you to the larger whole.”

The Slytherin took a few moments to consider and try to internalize what had been said. He did not exist in a world that had magic...he had to think that he existed as a part of it. A part that could link him to so much more.

Professor Jinn continued after a long pause. “The same is true of all of us. Of myself and Obi-Wan. Both of you, I want your eyes to remain closed but I want you think of each other. Of what the other must look like sitting across from you. Think of your friendship, of happy moments together.”

Anakin imagined Obi-Wan, his yellow and black tie perfectly straight, his auburn hair with streaks of gold through it, of throwing sponges at each other during detention. Suddenly it was like the ever present substance of magic almost parted, took shape around Obi-Wan, and with his eyes closed, Anakin could see him. Could see the shape of him surrounded by yellow and red, the colors merging beautifully throughout him, somehow showing him the sense of protectiveness his friend had, his sense of justice, fairness, of righteousness. His potential for devotion. It was overwhelming. Anakin suddenly found breathing an activity he had to actively force himself to do. Almost without thinking about it he reached out through the magic and touched Obi-Wan.

Across from him Obi-Wan gasped. The Hufflepuff boy had been able to get a general sense of an all encompassing serene force that was magic, but something changed. Something, no someone, Anakin, had touched him without moving a muscle. Instead of the general hum of magic, Obi-Wan saw vividly in his mind’s eye what he knew to be Anakin’s magical presence. It was indescribably beautiful. Anakin was vibrant. Green light illuminated his form, but other colors too. Reds and blues mingled and where his center would be was a small mass of black. Obi-Wan knew instinctively that this was Anakin’s rage and fear. But it was nothing compared to the fierce love and desire to protect that swirled through him. Anakin’s magical essence had touched him. Given him this sight. He could do nothing except show his friend the full acceptance that he had been shown. He concentrated on his own magical signature, on reaching out to connect with Anakin, show him that he was just as worthy of that protection and unconditional acceptance. Anakin smiled as he felt it. This kind of connection with someone, he had never dreamed this was possible. It was exhilarating and deeply moving.
Qui-Gon opened his eyes, only just realizing what was happening. He hadn’t thought this possible. Not with Obi-Wan’s ability to only generally sense magic during meditation. And he had no idea that Anakin would so easily be able to see someone else’s magical presence. That took most practitioners years. He had only meant it to be an exercise in focus and extending senses. This was...he had to stop this. A magical bond was not supposed to be made lightly or by eleven year olds.

He touched both boys on their shoulders, abruptly bring them out of their trances. Qui-Gon sighed and re-situated himself on his own cushion. This had just gotten much more serious than he had ever imagined.

Both boys were grinning and wiping tears from their eyes. Obi-Wan spoke first. “How did you do that, Anakin? That was amazing! Somehow I just knew it was you and I was...it was all light but it was you!”

“I know! I’ve never done that before! Professor do you-” his words died on his tongue as he saw the grave look on his Professor’s face.

“Obi-Wan, Anakin, I need you to listen carefully. I...I must apologize. I knew you were both gifted with meditation but I did not think you would be able to sense each other’s magical presence. That is incredibly advanced and rarely done. I should not have allowed that to happen.”

“What do you mean?” Asked Anakin. “It’s not like it hurt. That was incredible!”

“Anakin, you must understand,” the older man continued. “That kind of magic...it is rare because it has consequences. And because it can’t be broken. What you and Obi-Wan did should not have been possible. Touching another person’s magical signature is....It’s one of the deepest bonds two people can have. It will connect your fates, your emotions, your very magic, for the rest of your lives. This is-I am so sorry I could not stop it. We must speak with Headmaster Yoda about this.”

“Qui-Gon,” Obi-Wan said. “What do you mean? Why shouldn’t it have been possible? What exactly happens because of this? And why can’t it be broken? I mean, Anakin’s my best friend. It’s not the worst thing to be connected is it?”

Qui-Gon sighed. “This bond is rare because very few people can perform it. It is typically only done between lovers.” Anakin and Obi-Wan both shifted uncomfortably at hearing and adult say that word. “It’s often called a soul bond, as essentially your souls connected and accepted each other. Even very practiced wizards who attempt this often fail, because not all souls are compatible. Not even married couples typically pursue this. And there is no know way to sever it. You are both very young. This will certainly affect how the bond grows and it what purpose it serves between you two. However we must speak with the Headmaster. This is unprecedented in our society. Do you understand the gravity of this?”

Both boys nodded, no longer smiling but not panicked either.

“I am so sorry. I take full responsibility. I was unaware of what was happening between your signatures until it was too late.” Qui-Gon looked utterly distraught. Obi-Wan hugged his foster father tightly.

“It’s not your fault. It just happened. Anakin and I were just...it was instinct. You know more about magical presences than most witches and wizards alive, and even you couldn’t have known. Besides, Anakin and I are smart. We’ll research everything we can. Don’t worry, we’ll be okay.”

Qui-Gon sighed and wrapped his arms around his foster son, grateful that the universe had brought them together. He extended one arm and brought Anakin in as well. Given the bond, he though
In the Headmaster’s Office, Qui-Gon had given the full report to Headmaster Yoda. The ancient wizard didn’t react but was tapping his walking stick in a steady rhythm.

After a small eternity, the small wizard stopped pacing and finally spoke. “Most serious, most serious indeed. Qui-Gon, while you intended a basic practice, you could not have foreseen Mr. Skywalker’s abilities with magical detection. Nor could you have predicted a soul compatibility between two young charges. Such an event at such an age...this has not been heard of since near the beginnings of recorded magical history.” He continued pacing with his gnarled walking stick. “We can do nothing for now. Monitor the boys closely of course. We will inform Professor Windu and Madame Che, as well as Professor Billaba. But for now, the bond will take time to establish itself in ones so young. We cannot foresee how it may manifest or what those consequences may be. Young ones,” he addressed Anakin and Obi-Wan directly. “Dangerous this could be for you. You must be aware of your inner thoughts and feelings always. Pay very close attention to them, to your inner voice and to your heart. If you notice anything strange, contact Professor Jinn, Professor Windu, or myself as soon as you can. Under no circumstances will you tell other students or staff about this. Understand?”

Both boys nodded fervently. “Headmaster,” Qui-Gon asked, “Do you not wish to inform Anakin’s Head of House about this development as well?”

“Hm,” the walking stick tapped several more times. “What do you think, Mr. Skywalker?”

“Um, that is...I can’t say why, but I don’t want Professor Palpatine to know. He...I don’t like how he singles me out. My instincts always tell me not to trust him.”

The stick tapped three more times. “Very well. Trust your instincts. Many wizards do not learn to do so until it is too late. You should meditate on your instincts. Question why you know what you think you know. This should be the next session for you three.”

Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan, and Anakin all nodded in agreement to the Headmaster’s suggestion.

“Very well, that is all we can know at this time. We will all research into this matter, but do so carefully. This is a little-known topic that many people wish to pretend to know. Be aware, be open, and trust each other.” With that the Headmaster sat back down at his desk and dismissed the teacher and students in his office.

Standing outside the gargoyle statue, Professor Jinn addressed the two boys. “Take the Headmaster’s words seriously,” he said. “Any information any of us finds, we should present it to the others before we take it as gospel. This is esoteric and frankly dangerous territory. I will peruse the restricted section as well as my own library and I expect you two to stay away from it. We will work this out. I will do everything in my power to keep you both safe.”

Qui-Gon left, leaving the two boys alone. “I don’t get it,” said Anakin. “I don’t feel any different. I mean, it was even hard to do that when we were meditating. Is it really that scary?”

Obi-Wan frowned. “Well, it is really rare. Most wizards and witches never have enough power to be aware of their place in magic like that, much less someone else’s. It does mean that we’re linked for life though,” he finished nervously.

“But we’re best friends! I mean, don’t tell Ahsoka that. But we are! What if we can just look out for each other forever now? That would be wicked!”

Smiling for the first time since the transfigurations room, Obi-Wan agreed. “It would be rather cool to
know we could always have each other’s backs. And I don’t feel any different either.” He took a deep breath. “It’s getting a bit late though, we should head to dinner.”

Lying in bed that night, scratching Artoo’s ears gently as she purred beside him, Anakin didn’t think that whatever had happened between him and Obi-Wan was that bad. If it meant he had a real family, someone who would always be there and vice versa, well, that was all he’d ever really wanted.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for sticking with this! Hoping to have chapter 6 up on Wednesday. And hopefully featured in ch6: More Artoo! Palpatine being a creepy old creeper who creeps and has gross plans. And a Quidditch match! Seriously, I live for comments and feedback.
So I lied and posted the chapter today instead of Wednesday. It's a bit shorter than chapter 5 but next one should be longer. As always, thank you so much for reading and comments and feedback are always much appreciated!

Mace Windu shook his head for the tenth time that morning. He was finalizing plans for first through fourth year end of term exams. The only thing left to tweak was the first year test. And knowing Anakin Skywalker, there may not even be a point. The boy was just as likely to vanish something with a thought or wandlessly set fire to the room. Not that he’d managed that feat, but Mace didn’t count it out of the realm of possibility. The boy was certainly an anomaly.

When the Chosen One had been placed in Slytherin, he and the Headmaster had had serious concerns. However, the boy was not the withdrawn, almost-sinister child that Mace had been expecting. In fact he’d made several strong friendships outside of his own House. He was a good student, if a bit over-enthusiastic at times. Mace thought not for the first time that he was glad he was bald, or the boy and his friends would have him pulling out his own hair. Thinking of Skywalker, he thought back to his own private conversations with the Headmaster. He wasn’t entirely sure if it was wise to withhold so much information from the boy. Of course he was eleven and entitled to his childhood, but the mysterious Dark Lord was in all likelihood somewhere out there still. The Professor shuddered to think it, but it was a strong possibility.

The husk left behind after the Dark Lord’s attempt to kill the infant Skywalker had been disposed of, but the kind of Dark magic he was capable of...there were ways of cheating death. Lord Sidious had almost certainly employed them. The wizard had never shown his face to his followers, but they had flocked to him. His power was almost unrivaled and his inner circle bore lightning bolt tattoos to prove their allegiance. Some of them were in Azkaban, but many more were yet to be identified. Mace himself had retired from the Aurors to teach Defense at Hogwarts. Dead end after dead end as an Auror led him to believe that the most good he could do was to prepare the next generation, and magic help him, the Chosen One. And now said child had done the impossible. He had formed a bond at eleven years old, with another student who was only a year older. The whole thing made him want to reach for a bottle of Firewhisky. Bonds like that were exceedingly rare and damn near impossible to accomplish. And the boy had done it during a meditation exercise. Mace wanted to blame Qui-Gon, and found it frustrating that he couldn’t. He knew no one could predict children simply forming magical bonds. Plus the man loved Kenobi like a son. He wouldn’t have put the boy in that kind of danger if he had even an inkling of what could transpire. Still, there was something about Skywalker that Mace was wary of.

And the decision not to tell Palpatine was an interesting one. Mace didn’t think the Potions Master was particularly untrustworthy. He was a Slytherin to the bone, even though he hadn’t attended Hogwarts as a child. Ambitious, always looking to climb social ladders, not looking for friendships but for opportunities. When the Headmaster had told him that Skywalker did not want his Head of House to know about the bond, he had been a bit surprised, assuming the two were close. The question of why they weren’t was something he filed away to consider at a later time. Right now he needed to finalize end of term exams and meet Instructor Tachi at the Three Broomsticks in an Hour. For professional discussions, of course.
It was Saturday, Anakin thought. The Saturday. Second Quidditch match of the year, but his first one. His very first match. Slytherin vs. Gryffindor. He sat at the breakfast table unable to eat more than a bit of toast. He knew he could fly well, and scoring with the quaffle was like second nature to him thanks to Luminara’s training. But half the Gryffindor team were playing on brand new brooms, and Anakin had only a school broom. Well, he was still fast. He could dodge and feint, and if Bruck and Aalto could keep up with the plays, they might have a shot.

Ahsoka came up and punched him good-naturedly in the shoulder. “Ready? I mean, I’m gonna catch the Snitch so don’t take it too hard when you lose.”

Anakin grinned. “Please, Luminara has been a seeker for four years. You’re gonna need more than your snippy attitude to win this one.” He was glad to gloss over his nerves with false bravado with someone. He knew Ahsoka was just as nervous as he was.

Luminara stood at that moment and told all team members to get down to the pitch and get changed.

“I better go too,” said Ahsoka. “Ferus wanted a team meeting before the match. See you on the pitch!” With a final grin she strode off towards the Gryffindor table.

Barriss clapped Anakin on the back. “You’ll do great. Luminara said no one can dodge bludgers like you and keep focused on the quaffle. I suppose I’ll even make an appearance in the stands.”

From Barriss, that was practically a hug.

Anakin smiled gratefully at his friend and headed off after Luminara and the rest of the team. Deep breath, he could do this.

On the field, Anakin felt his nerves settle. He was surrounded by teammates, and Ahsoka had a death grip on her broom on the opposite side of the instructor. In the stands, he could see Obi-Wan and Professor Jinn, and Barriss had made an appearance as promised. “I want a clean match! On my mark…” The whistle blew and players launched into the air. Gryffindor had won the quaffle toss up but Anakin was determined.

Ahsoka had taken a vantage point high above most of the players. The Gryffindor beaters, Ferus and Daara, were well coordinated. Anakin dodged a well placed hit and continued to look for an opening to grab the quaffle. He may not have a top of the line broom but he was fast and trusted his instincts. The Gryffindor Chaser Soara had the ball, but she was looking for an opportunity to pass. Quinlan Vos, a third year Slytherin beater, lobbed a direct shot at Soara and she threw a sloppy pass to another Chaser. Anakin pushed his broom as fast as it would go intercepted the Quaffle, nearly colliding with the intended recipient as he did so. Before the other chase could blink Anakin had pivoted and was off towards the other side of the pitch. Unfortunately Bruck and Aalto where nowhere near where they needed to be for this formation. Ferus Olin was suddenly practically on top of him, aiming a bludger. Anakin rolled on his broom, using the momentum to shoot up above Ferus and neatly avoiding the bludger. He was over halfway to the goal post and still, Bruck was lagging behind. ‘So much for their fancy brooms.’ thought Anakin. He was supposed to pass off to Bruck while the beaters were focused on him, but there was no way that could work at the moment. Speaking of Beaters, the other Gryffindor armed with a stick, Daara, was coming up. A double assault by both of them would almost certainly land him in the hospital wing. He tightened the grip he had on the quaffle between his left elbow and side.

Daara quickly lined up a perfect swing, and Anakin could feel Ferus readying his own shot. Anakin
took a deep breath. Daara’s hit was heading right for him, but Ferus was waiting to see what
direction he dodged for a follow up. Running on instinct, he rolled again to avoid Daara’s bludger
seconds before it hit his head, and still upside down, dove for the ground only to pull back up,
completing an almost perfect circle riding the underside of his broom. He was vaguely aware of the
crowd cheering, but he couldn’t focus on that. He still had the quaffle and Gryffindor’s other chasers
were preventing Aalto and Bruck from making much headway. Anakin was close enough the right
side hoop at any rate. With the red-robed Chasers distracted and the Beaters currently out of
bludgers, Anakin sped towards the goal and scored a neat 10 points for Slytherin. He took a moment
to appreciate the cheers.

The Gryffindor Keeper now had the ball and Anakin took position further down the field. Bruck
looked furious. “That wasn’t the plan you freak!”

“You weren’t were you supposed to be! Was I supposed to pass when you were swarmed by
their Chasers?!”

Bruck didn’t answer as he took off towards where Soara had the quaffle once again, but his face was
all fury.

The Gryffindor team operated extremely well together and Anakin hoped Luminara caught the
Snitch sooner rather than later. They were going to be lagging behind in points before too long.

The only way Anakin could score was solo. Rarely could Aalto or Bruck make it past the
Gryffindor’s defense. Suddenly he noticed Luminara dive. Seconds later Ahsoka was speeding as
fast as she could towards the other Seeker’s position. The Slytherin Beaters focused on the Seekers,
so it was up to the Chasers and Keepers to prevent more goals being scored. Aayla, another
Gryffindor Chaser, had the quaffle now. Bruck checked her from the side, hard, and she lost it. The
larger Slytherin Chaser went after it but he was too slow and quaffle was getting farther and farther
from him. Anakin dove as fast as he could, nearly straight down. The quaffle was closer to the
ground than not. Suddenly he was yanked back. Bruck had grabbed his robes hard. His own
teammate! The sudden pull combined with speeds of the brooms yanked Anakin completely off his
broom, falling thirty or so feet to the ground. He noted somewhat hysterically that he could see every
blade of grass in perfect detail. He thought nothing else for sometime.

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Anakin awoke in strange surroundings. He was on a soft cot, with fitted white sheets. This must be
the hospital wing. As he sat up his head pounded. “Careful now,” came the soft tones of Professor
Palpatine. The man was occupying a chair by Anakin’s bedside. You hit your head quite hard on
impact. Nasty thing Mr. Chun did. I will be speaking with him shortly.”

Anakin hazily remembered the older Slytherin Chaser grabbing him and sending him careening
towards the ground without a broom. His Head of House was pulling the stopper out of a silver vial.
“Here, drink this. It should help ease that headache. It’s my own special brew.” Anakin was unsure.
His Professor had backed off since the beginning of the year, but drinking something the man offered
him seemed dubious. “Not to worry, a simple pain relief draught.” He pressed the vial into Anakin’s
hand. Anakin thought he was perhaps being silly. Certainly the Potions Master wouldn’t hurt him.
Try and use him, sure, but he was employed by Headmaster Yoda and if the Headmaster trusted him,
it had to be fine. It wasn’t as though a Professor would poison a student under Yoda’s nose. And the
pain was rather intense. Anakin drained the small vial and returned it to his Professor. Standing, his
Head of House pocketed the vial and made to leave. “Feel better, young Mr. Skywalker.” His grin
would always be unsettling, Anakin decided.
Not long after Palpatine left, Madame Che came in. “How are you feeling, dear?” she laid out a table with a few instruments and potions.

“Just a headache.” Anakin replied. Professor Palpatine’s potion didn’t seem to have any effect on the pain.

“Not to worry, I’ll get you fixed up in no time.” the healer replied.

A thought came to Anakin. “Who won the game?”

Madame Che smiled an exasperated smile. “Gryffindor, dear. Ms. Tano caught the snitch but you’ll have to ask your teammates about the details.”

Anakin sighed. Not only had they lost, he’d been betrayed by a teammate to boot. He let Madame Che examine him and drank the pain tonic she gave him. “You have visitors,” she said. “But I’ve told them only a few minutes. I want you to rest until dinner, understood?”

Anakin nodded. No sooner had Madame Che left the room than Obi-Wan and Ahsoka came nearly running in, taking up post on either side of his cot. “That worthless son of a bitch!” Ahsoka fumed.

Laughing at Obi-Wan’s shocked expression in reaction to Ahsoka’s language, the Slytherin replied, “I know, I can’t believe he would do that to his own teammate. Luminara is going to hex him into next month.”

“I bet she kicks him off the team. It’s what he deserves, honestly. Not to mention he couldn’t fly faster than a butterfly if his life depended on it. No offense, but maybe your team needs to stop handing out positions to people because of their family names.” Ahsoka had her arms crossed over her chest and was breathing harshly.

“I hope she does boot him. But hey, I’m ok. And I heard you caught the Snitch.”

Ahsoka changed her mood immediately. “Yeah, but honestly I think Luminara was distracted by Chun practically throwing you off your broom.”

Obi-Wan chimed in “But before that, that was some maneuvering around two bludgers. Brilliant flying.” He put his hand on his Slytherin friend’s shoulder.

“Yeah!” Ahsoka agreed. “People went wild for that. Nice going, Sky Guy.”

“Sky Guy, really?” Anakin asked. But honestly he was glad to see his friend smiling again.

“It suits you,” she said flipping her braids behind her shoulder. “I have to go change, but see you after dinner?”

Anakin nodded and Ahsoka left the hospital wing, crimson quidditch robes sweeping the floor.

Obi-Wan sat in the chair that Palpatine had vacated, his hand still on Anakin’s shoulder. “Are you really okay?” His friend asked, concerned.

“Really okay.” Anakin smiled and briefly put his hand on top of Obi-Wan’s.

“When you were going after the quaffle, I got this awful feeling. I was full of dread and fear. Then my head started hurting, but it felt like it was from far away or happening to someone else.” Obi-Wan touched the spot on his forehead that mirrored where Anakin’s bandages were.

“Do you think it’s the...you know?”
“I think it has to be. I think maybe...I was feeling what you were feeling. It was so strange. And then you were on the ground and I couldn’t do anything and it was terrible.”

“I’m alright though,” Anakin squeezed his friend’s hand. But that’s kind of cool, right? Like, way better than walkie-talkies! If one of us in trouble and the other will always know? We can always look out for each other.”

The Hufflepuff boy gave a half smile. “I’ve no idea what ‘walkie-talker’ is but it would be cool if we always knew if the other needed help. Speaking of, do you need anything?”

“Nah, the pain’s not so bad now and Madame Che said I have to stay here til dinner.”

“Alright, then” said Obi-Wan. With a final gentle squeeze to Anakin’s shoulder he too left. Anakin decided to get some sleep before dinner.

Later that night in the Slytherin Common Room, Luminara called a team meeting.

“I never thought I’d have to say or do this,” she addressed the room, as curious students pretended not to listen in. “Bruck Chun has been removed from the team. No one on my team fights against a fellow member, especially not on the field. With fifth years preparing for OWLS and end of term exams coming up, we’ll hold tryouts for a new Chaser when we’re all back from the Christmas holidays. Anyone who has a problem with me cutting Chun can take it up with me privately. Are we clear?” Everyone nodded and dispersed to dorms or the library. Anakin was glad his fellow Chaser was gone. Looking out for bludgers was enough, he didn’t need to look out for disgruntled teammates on top of that. But knowing Chun, retaliation was coming. He opted to head for bed instead of trying to pretend to get any schoolwork done.

As he closed the bed curtains around himself, he noticed Artoo had something under her paw. Upon further inspection, he was a folded piece of parchment. Anakin slid it out from under her as she yawned and stretched into his comforter. There was a crude doodle of what he supposed was meant to be himself, flying upside down with two bludgers crossing and missing him. It was signed Obi-Wan. Anakin smiled widely and refolded the parchment, placing it in his trunk, in a page of a Muggle book he’d brought so that no sneaky roommates would find it.

“Artoo,” he said gently while scratching her ear. “Did you go to the Hufflepuff dorms?” Artoo let out a short meow as if to say “obviously”. He dug out one of her treats from his bedside drawer and curled up for the night, Artoo purring softly.

Elsewhere in the castle:

Sheev Palpatine, or the man who was currently using that name, was in his private rooms. He had just finished a fire call with Jard Dooku, the Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Magic. Dooku was his most trusted follower and the only one who knew of Palpatine’s true identity and survival after the incident with an infant Skywalker. Dooku had in fact aided the Dark Lord, gathering his only two Horcruxes and performing the rituals needed to slowly restore him to his physical body. It had taken many painful years, but the journey had only proven to the Dark Lord that was indeed nearly stronger than death.

An now. Now the boy had ingested the potion. It had contained Palpatine’s own blood, Ashwinder eggs to foster trust, and roots of a particular and very ancient ash tree, to bind their fates together. Those roots had taken years to procure. The potion would take months to fully work through the boy’s body and mind. It was stretching the timeline. After his first near-death, this body wouldn’t
hold out much longer before he needed a new one, even with the help of having two Horcruxes. He had waited years. He could wait a months more for a true shot at escaping mortality for good.
Anakin Skywalker and Hospital Wing Meet Again

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Anakin woke for one of the last days of classes before Christmas Holidays. He couldn’t believe three months had gone by so fast. He was a bit sad that he’d be staying at the castle for the break, but he knew Owen always had tons of work to do at the shop leading up to the holidays and he’d only be underfoot. Quite literally, as he tended to demand Owen explain everything to him about the parts of the vehicles he fixed.

Showering and dressing for the day, he headed to the Great Hall for breakfast. He couldn’t help but smile at the decorations. Living with Owen, they hardly ever had one of the tiny half-dead trees left over at lots by December 24th. But Hogwarts was filled with live trees and decorations. The entrance of the Great Hall held the biggest pine tree Anakin had ever seen. It was decorated with balls the color of each house. It all clashed horrendously which is why he supposed Headmaster Yoda insisted on it. Wreaths and mistletoe where everywhere in the castle, and the portraits could be heard complaining the the garish bows obstructed their views. The ceiling of the Great Hall was reflect the snow outside and as exams wound to a close even the Professors seemed less strict. Petro had deliberately transfigured his rock into a tarantula to scare Sola Amidala, but had been terrified when Barriss levitated the tarantula straight into Petro’s face. Professor Jinn had detracted no points and only remarked that it was wise of Petro to turn his rock into a species that was only slightly poisonous to humans as the boy rushed out, spider still firmly on his face, to the hospital wing.

Ever since the meditation incident, Anakin had only practiced alone or with Professor Jinn. The Professor had said it was important that Anakin get a hold of his own internal boundaries and emotions before attempting to connect with someone magically again. Anakin agreed but part of him very much missed Obi-Wan’s presence. He grinned at said friend across the Hall. Obi-Wan was an early riser so had already eaten and was revising his Herbology notes at the Hufflepuff table. (At least Anakin assumed, as Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws had Herbology midterms that morning.) Though he was able to control his magic better. His spells with his wand no longer seemed to magnify in force and his control of wandless better was stronger, more controlled and nuanced though far from perfect still.

The previous day had been taxing. The Potions midterm was easy enough, especially with Palpatine no longer breathing down his neck at every opportunity. In fact, Anakin was rather growing fonder of the Potions Master. With less blatant favoritism, he had grown in his abilities and confidence with the subject. Not to mention the lack of meddling in his quidditch or other after school activities. He had even stopped being as dismissive towards Ahsoka and other Gryffindors. Perhaps he had misjudged his Head of House.

History of Magic could have gone better, but if Professor Nu couldn’t answer his questions about the ethics of withholding possibly life-saving magical interventions to curb atrocities, then she had no one to blame but herself. Hopefully the three feet he had written detailing the ethical dilemmas along with supporting facts from the Goblin Wars was enough to get him through.

This morning he had his Charms midterm, followed by Defense in the afternoon. Sundays spent reviewing Charms with Obi-Wan (and applying theories to various paper airplanes and origami creations, though he was still sorry about burning one of the librarian’s prized tables on accident) had him feeling confident.

Barriss sat down on his left and grabbed some toast. The girl seemed more sullen than usual.
“Worried about Charms?” Anakin asked, concerned for his friend.

“No,” the Slytherin girl drawled, staring at her toast. “Just wishing I didn’t have to go home.”

Anakin put an arm around his friend, knowing she dreaded extended periods of time with her family.

“I could hex you and maybe Madame Che could say you had to stay here because of a contagious disease. I bet we could find a really good hex.”

Barriss gave a half smile at her friend’s attempt at elevating her mood. “If only. Now that I’m at Hogwarts there’s more pressure than ever on me. Not just for grades and ‘upholding the family name’” she scoffed. “But to be just like them. Like Luminara. She’s so perfect. Prefect, Quidditch captain, got her tattoos as soon as she could. Not to mention my parents’ political leanings. Pure blood this and pure blood that. It’s all tradition for tradition’s sake. It’s maddening.”

“Tattoos?” questioned Anakin. “They want you to get tattoos like Luminara’s?”

“It’s a family tradition” she spat the last word out. “I mean, I don’t mind the idea. Before witches and wizards had their own societies where my family was from, we used our own special marks to show who could be trusted, who was magical, had proven themselves in the magical community. But if I’m marked, it should be of my own desire and my own design. If I did it they way my family wants me to, it would just show that I’m a blood purist like them, that I only care about people who have money and move in the right social circles. I couldn’t bear it.”

Anakin didn’t know what to say. His own mark wasn’t by choice either, but it wasn’t put there by people who were supposed to love and respect him.

“I’m sorry, Barriss. Owl me anytime if you need anything. I mean it. Or Ahsoka. She’s your friend too. And it would make your parents throw a fit if you were owling a Gryffindor.” He joked.

“Thank you, Anakin, you’re a good friend.” Barriss stood to go prepare for the morning’s first exam.

The Charms Exam went smoothly, with Anakin acing the theory portion thanks to Obi-Wan’s suggestions at the beginning of the year. Professor Gallia didn’t even mind when his Glacius charm froze not only the wooden box on the stool, but the stool itself.

Ahsoka gained highest marks for first years in Defense midterms. Her agility, rivaled only by Barriss’, had the two of them dueling like naturals until Professor Windu called an end to their session.

Obi-Wan met up with Anakin after dinner that night. “Done with your exams now, right?” The Hufflepuff boy asked, both headed towards their spot in the library.

“Almost. Just Astronomy left tonight and then no more studying.”

Obi-Wan smiled. “We’ll be way too busy having fun in the castle for that. Though we should keep up with everything just to be cautious.”

Anakin rolled his eyes good naturedly at his friend. “Yes, Professor, I promise not to neglect my studies while I’m trying to figure out how to make my own stink bombs.”

“Seriously though, I’m glad we both get to stay for holidays. Usually it’s only me and Qui-Gon and a few professors. Gods it gets boring.”

“Don’t worry. Reading about how we can become Animagi definitely counts as studying. Plus we’ll
have the quidditch pitch to ourselves!” Anakin beamed, pulling out his Astronomy text and stifling a yawn. Of course the Astronomy exam would be at midnight that night, two days after nothing but day time exams.

“Don’t tell anyone about that!” Obi-Wan said alarmed. “If Qui-Gon finds out when we start researching, he’ll be pissed. You do not want to see Qui-Gon angry.”

“Don’t worry,” Anakin shrugged. “We’re gonna start with the basics. Stuff that’s in regular text books. We won’t be up to anything really suspicious for at least a good year.”

Obi-Wan wondered for the millionth time about his decision to have a Slytherin best friend.

When exams were over and the last students heading home from the break were on the train, Obi-Wan and Anakin sat in the Great Hall over a game of Exploding Snap.

Petro, Lux, Tyzen, Barriss, and the other Slytherin First Years, Ganodi and Kato, had all left. One or two older Hogwarts students had stayed, but the vast castle felt so different without the crowds of students making noise in the Hall or rushing through the corridors.

Deciding to take advantage of said empty quidditch pitch, the boys headed towards the field with Madame Tachi’s permission and their promise to do nothing more exciting than practice quaffle throws. Soon after the quaffle lost its appeal, they were racing from one goal post to the other. Anakin was winning soundly with Obi-Wan nearly always at least a dozen feet behind him. Laughing off his friend’s accusations that he “flew like a maniac”, Anakin reach the center post and pivoted to head back again. Suddenly a feeling in his stomach stopped him so abruptly it nearly threw him from his broom. There was a pain in his stomach, like a solid mass. Obi-Wan pulled to a stop beside his friend, panting. “What’s wrong?” Concern was written in his grey-green eyes.

“Not sure. I just-” The pain doubled without warning. What felt like a cramp was now a burning weight in his gut. Anakin tilted on his broom and Obi-Wan through a quick arm around him. “I’m guiding us down.” He said with authority and did just that. On the grass Anakin was doubled over. The pain was no longer just in his stomach but seemed to take root in the base of his throat and his lower back. It was white hot and like nothing he’d felt before.

“Anakin, can you talk to me?!”

There was no answer

Slightly panicked and realizing his friend couldn’t speak much less walk, Obi-Wan assured him he’d bring help back. He mounted his broom and took off faster than he’d ever flown towards the castle.

Anakin wasn’t sure how much time had passed but soon he was dimly aware that Madame Che and Headmaster Yoda were leaning over him. The pain was so intense he was unable to vocalize it. He wasn’t sure he could or would be conscious much longer if it persisted. The Healer and Headmaster conjured a cot and were moving him up the grounds and into the hospital wing. The Headmaster was muttering under his breath. A language Anakin didn’t recognize but that did seem to sand some of the sharper edges of the pain.

Finally laid out in the hospital wing, Madame Che proceeded to run diagnostics over him with her wand.

“Can’t you give him something for the pain? Make him sleep at least? He’s in agony!” Obi-Wan nearly shouted. The Hufflepuff boy was beside himself. He was also feeling what he was now certain was an echo of his friend’s pain.
“We can’t,” replied the Healer. “Not yet. We may need him to give us verbal information. But we’ll do everything we can.”

“I can tell you!” Obi-Wan did shout this time. “We were flying and everything was fine. Then he got a pain in his gut, like a weighted mass. By the time I got us to the ground it spread. First to here,” he point to the hollow of his throat “and then into the base of his spine. That’s when I went for help.”

“He told you this, hm?” The wizened Headmaster pinned Obi-Wan with a knowing gaze.

“No, it was...you know.” He didn’t know if the Healer was aware of the bond he and Anakin shared.

“Very curious, indeed.” the man said. “Vokara, please give young Skywalker a sleeping draught and a pain potion. Mr. Kenobi can tell us what Mr. Skywalker is not able to at the moment.”

The Healer looked uncertain but did as the Headmaster asked. Obi-Wan practically sagged with relief as Anakin’s body unclenched from the pain.

“Please continue to monitor Mr. Skywalker. Mr. Kenobi and I must speak.”

Madame Che nodded and continued tending to her patient.

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In the Headmaster’s office, Obi-Wan’s anxiety was still spiking. He had no idea what was wrong with his friend. Qui-Gon soon joined them though which helped a bit. After explaining the situation to the Transfigurations professor, his foster father stroked his beard.

“So the bond is still very much intact. And possibly growing in strength.” He paused to sip his tea. “Though of course the pressing issue is what is happening to Mr. Skywalker. You’re sure he displayed no unusual behavior, ate or drank nothing out of the ordinary before this happened, Obi-Wan?”

Obi-Wan shook his head no for the twentieth time. “What if it is the bond that’s hurting him?” The boy was terrified that the answer to his question could be yes. That he was in part guilty for what Anakin was going through and that they’d have to sever their connection.

“No, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon put a steadying arm around the boy’s shoulders. “Bonds like yours are forged in trust and respect. They don’t hurt people. However you promise you haven’t tried meditating with Anakin again since you formed it?”

“Of course not. But, when we did...form it.” He paused. Discussing this with someone besides Anakin felt like he was betraying his friend. What they had was strictly between them. However if it meant he could help, it might be worth it. “When I saw him, not just him but him in the magic, as it, there was a dark place in him. Just above here,” he gestured to the center of his torso. “And that’s where he first felt the pain, because that’s where I could feel it too.”

The older men considered this for a moment.

“Still,” the Headmaster started, “This only means that the affliction began in a place where Skywalker already harbored negative emotions. It does not mean that the bond caused it, only that something acted very deliberately to target the darkness in the boy.”

“Anakin isn’t dark!” objected Obi-Wan. “He’s my friend! Just because he’s in Slytherin-”
The Headmaster raised his hand. “Darkness is not who a person is, it is something that all beings carry within them. Some carry more than others. Some choose to let that darkness grow and consume their light. Anakin is a good child with much more light than dark in him” he reassured the boy. “But this...this was someone trying to reach the darkness in him. This is very distressing. Very dangerous.”

Obi-Wan sat back down, not realizing he’d stood up so quickly in his friend’s defense.

“We have much to consider in this matter,” the Headmaster continued. He focused on Obi-Wan. “Keep an eye on your friend when he is better. If he seems different, if his emotions change drastically, please let Professor Jinn know. We do not spy on students,” the old man read Obi-Wan’s mind, “but we must know that Mr. Skywalker is safe.”

The Hufflepuff nodded. “Now, to your dorm. In the morning you may visit your friend if Madame Che approves.”

Obi-Wan descended the spiral staircase, thinking hard about what he could do for his friend. He knew that even if the problem didn’t lie in the bond, the answer might. He would have to convince Professor Jinn to let them meditate together again.

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When Anakin awoke, it took him a moment to recognize the white sterile decor of the hospital wing. Slowly his memories came back to him. Racing on brooms with Obi-Wan, then the agony that seemed to spread through his body. Being on the cold grass curled in on himself, vaguely aware of Obi-Wan’s promise to get help. Then not much more. He felt like he should have bruises given how bad everything had hurt, but checking his body he saw nothing. There were only minor aches here and there.

Dawn light was coming through the windows and he expected the shuffling footsteps he heard would be Madame Che’s, intent on running tests or force-feeding him broth. When the Potions Master came into view he was a bit surprised.

“I am so sorry to hear about your incident yesterday evening,” the man came in with a swirl of black robes, accented with red this time, and took the chair next to Anakin’s bed. “I trust you are feeling better now?” The old man laid a hand on Anakin’s arm and for a moment, the aches went away completely. He realized how lucky he was to have a Head of House who cared about him so much.

“Much better, sir” Anakin replied. “I should be out of the hospital ward soon.”

“Oh, excellent to hear my boy. Once you’re feeling better, feel free to come by my office during the break. Wouldn’t want those Potions skills to atrophy before the next semester begins.”

Anakin smiled at his Professor. It was a kind offer and he would rather like to keep his reputation as the best student in his Potions class. Plus it was perhaps time to get to know his Head of House a bit better. He honestly wasn’t as unfair as Ahsoka said.

“And before I forget.” The man produced a bar of chocolate from his pocket and left it on the stand beside Anakin’s bed. He exited the room with the same dramatic swirl as when he’d entered.

Anakin had to admit, the chocolate did make him feel better.

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Elsewhere in the Castle:
Obi-Wan was walking down the corridors to the hospital wing. He’d barely slept, thinking of what might be wrong with his friend. Nearing his destination, he saw Professor Palpatine leaving from what could only be the Healing ward. The Professor barely nodded at him before passing him by. Something about Palpatine coming from what could only be a visit to Anakin at this hour struck him as very off.

When he reached Anakin, his friend was already awake, confirming his suspicions about Palpatine. Anakin was nearly halfway through a large bar of chocolate. Obi-Wan didn’t recognize the brand.

“What was he doing here?” The older boy asked, taking the bedside chair.

Swallowing Anakin replied “He just wanted to make sure I was alright. He’s not that bad, really. He was nice and brought me chocolate! Have some!” Anakin broke off a hunk for his friend. Obi-Wan pocketed it for later. He had other things on his mind.

“That man always has an ulterior motive when it comes to you,” he said darkly.

“Maybe he just wants to look out for me.” The Slytherin replied indignantly. “Half the school, including the teachers, looked at me like I was a murderer because I got sorted into Slytherin. Maybe Professor Palpatine just wanted to make sure someone had my back!”

Anakin’s anger startled his friend. “I didn’t mean it like that,” replied Obi-Wan. “And you know I’ve always got your back, right? Me and Ahsoka. And Barriss even though she might not admit it in public.”

Anakin cast his eyes down, ashamed of his outburst. “I know, you’re right. It’s just hard sometimes. And being stuck in here doesn’t help. But I get out around lunch! We could start research.”

Obi-Wan matched his friend’s smile. “Definitely. Meet me in front of the Hufflepuff dorm. No librarians to fuss over us. I’ll have Winky bring us scones.”

Plans agreed upon, Obi-Wan left the hospital wing with a research mission of his own.

Chapter End Notes

Yay, stuff and things are happening! Obi-Wan is the perpetual voice of reason, poor guy. Next time: more crappy Gryffindors, more surly Barriss, and more of a certain DADA professor considering taking up drinking as a day time hobby. Comments and feedback get me out of bed in the morning. So do kudos, bookmarks, and leaving dear carcasses as courting gifts on my porch. J/K about that last part. I don't have a porch and my spouse would be nonplussed.
Anakin Skywalker and Xmas at Hogwarts

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anakin wasn’t sure what to expect on Christmas Day. The holiday break had been fantastic so far. Running around the corridors and quidditch pitch with Obi-Wan, the Librarian hardly ever shushing them when they cracked up in the library. Even the occasional visit to the Potions classroom for extra work hadn’t been bad. It was quite interesting actually, even if the Potions Master seemed to begrudge Obi-Wan’s presence. He was a bit surprised that his best friend even wanted to come, but he wasn’t about to tell him no.

So waking up with Artoo curled up at his shoulder and a small pile of presents at the foot of his bed was a surprise. Owen had always gotten him something small and vice versa, but he’d never looked at Christmas as the great binging of toys and sugar that many kids did. He didn’t want to open everything by himself so he made his way to the Hufflepuff dorms and asked the portrait if Obi-Wan was awake yet. Miffed at running an errand on a holiday, the painting slunk off into the dorm to check.

Shortly after Obi-Wan was standing in front of him, holding his own small load of presents. “Merry Christmas, Anakin.” Beamed Obi-Wan.

“Merry Christmas, Obi-Wan. We should open our present together. Let’s go back to my dorm!”

They boys set off for the short walk back down to the dungeons. Anakin vaguely remembered Luminara taking pride in the fact that only Slytherins had been in the Slytherin dorms in hundreds of years, but frankly that sounded ridiculous to Anakin. Obi-Wan was his best friend.

As they entered the passageway Anakin led the way up to the boys’ dorm when he realized Obi-Wan wasn’t following. The boy was staring in awe at the glass bay window that separated the common room from the lake. Bright winter light was filtering through the lake water, and the giant squid was slowly propelling itself by, with smaller fish darting every direction around it. Combined with the green lighting of the room it felt like what Anakin imagined a glass submarine would be like.

“It’s gorgeous.” Obi-Wan voiced, still staring in rapture at the scene in front of him.

“Yeah, it might be my favorite part of the castle.” Anakin admitted. “Come on, presents!”

Once seated on Anakin’s bed the boys arranged their presents in between them. Anakin picked up a small one from Ahsoka. Unwrapping it he found a beaded bracelet. Looking closely, he could see blue stones in the chain along with the metal beads. There was a note with the gift. “SkyGuy, thought you might like this. The stones are sapphire and lapis lazuli, to keep you safe in the air. XO, Ahsoka.”

Smiling gently Anakin looped the bracelet around his left wrist. He hoped she liked the book he’d gotten her on famous Seekers. Obi-Wan opened his gift from Qui-Gon first. It was a book, as was their tradition, but this one was titled Famous Animagi and What They Knew”. They boys exchanged a look. “How the hell did he know?” Questioned Anakin.

Obi-Wan grinned and shook his head. “The man is nearly impossible to keep secrets from. I’m sure he knew the second I started asking him about when he became one.”
The next gift Anakin opened was from his cousin. It was a cheap transistor radio kit, the kind Anakin had mastered when he was six, but it was nice to have something from Owen. He’d owled Owen some Wizard sweets he’d traded another first year for in exchange for Charms help.

Tyzen had wrapped up some chocolate frogs for Anakin since he knew they were his favorite, and the only presents Anakin had left were from Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon.

Qui-Gon’s gift was a book on wizards and witches known for wandless magic and Anakin couldn’t wait to start reading it. “If Qui-Gon got you a book for Christmas, it means you’re practically family now,” Obi-Wan grinned.

The last present Anakin had to open was from Obi-Wan. The older boy blushed a bit. “I mean it’s nothing amazing. If you don’t like it I’ll understand.”

Anakin rolled his eyes and pulled back the paper on the oddly-shaped package. It was a smooth yet faceted green stone. It fit in the palm of his hand perfectly. As he turned it it caught the light, reflecting hues of yellow and blue. The stone itself was perfectly clear with not an opaque spot marring it.

“It’s just...when I saw you when we were meditating...that’s how you looked to me. Qui-Gon gave me that stone a long time ago but when I thought of what to get you, I knew it wasn’t mine anymore, that it really belongs to you.”

Anakin was afraid to speak for fear he might let out a sob. Instead he tackled his best friend in a hug, crushing the wrapping paper between them and causing Artoo to let out a haughty hiss.

“It’s perfect,” Anakin said. “Here, from me to you.” Anakin hadn’t known exactly what to get his friend so he’d consulted Professor Jinn and asked the man to make a purchase for him in Hogsmeade.

Obi-Wan was a bit confused. “A bit of mirror?” He asked. Anakin produced a twin piece from his pocket.

“Remember when I told you about Muggle walkie-talkies? This is even better! See? If you look into the mirror and say my name, I’ll know it and we can talk. Same goes for me. Think of what we can get away with with these!”

Obi-Wan grinned but soon sobered. “This must have cost you a fortune, I couldn’t possibly-”

“Obi-Wan, I’ve been poor my whole life. Now that I have a little money, I can spend it how I want. Plus consider it a mutual investment. I mean I benefit from it too so it’s not JUST for you. It’s for us and our future of taking over the world.”

That logic couldn’t be argued with. As the boys ate chocolate and gave Artoo treats, Anakin thought that this had to be the best Christmas he’d ever had.

Christmas dinner was a small affair, with the handful of students staying for the holiday and the Headmaster, Potions Professor, and Professor Jinn.

Headmaster Yoda made a show of shooting off fireworks from his cane (which had to house his wand) and accidentally made a nice explosion of pink and purple ones right next to the Potion Master’s head, causing him to cut his thumb on his carving knife. As things were winding down, Professor Palpatine rose to give a toast. Anakin wasn’t completely sure, but he thought the man was looking more pale than usual.
“As we celebrate the Solstice,” the man intoned, “we do so gratefully with the community of Hogwarts.” He lifted his glass to signal a toast. As he everyone touched glasses, the Professor’s touched Anakin’s rather a bit too hard, sloshing some of the man’s drink into the boy’s, but no one thought anything of it.

When dinner was over, everyone scattered back to dormitories to firecall loved ones or to offices to prepare for the coming semester. Professor Palpatine made it to the edge of the Great Hall entrance when he buckled. Noticing, Anakin went to his Head of House helped him back up. “Are you alright sir? You look a bit off.”

“Nothing but a common cold, my boy. At my age they do create more trouble than I’m sure you’re used to.” He grimaced as he drew himself up to full height. Anakin noticed the bags under his eyes and the sallow quality of his skin. Something about the man seemed deeply off.

“Let us help you back down to the dungeons,” Anakin volunteered.

“That would be lovely. In fact I do have a present for you in my chambers.”

The boys walked slowly with their Potions Master between them, Obi-Wan feeling as though he was walking into a trap.

When the reached the potions classroom, Palpatine insisted they wait there while he went into his personal quarters. He returned with two parcels, one obviously a broomstick. “For you, my boy.”

The man presented them to Anakin. “Use them well and wisely.” With a cough he ushered the boys out and closed his doors behind them.

They walked silently back to now-empty Great Hall. Anakin unwrapped the broom first. Obi-Wan was shocked. It was definitely top of the line. “This must have cost 10 galleons, easy.” The Hufflepuff boy wondered out loud.

Anakin had to admit that it was a handsome broom. Accepting something like this from a professor was...odd. But the speed he could get! The maneuvers! If Luminara thought he was a good flyer on his school issued broom, he could be the best Chaser in the school on this!

“Are you keeping it?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Of course I am!” Anakin replied indignantly. “This is the best broom ever! I could fly circles around other players on this.”

Obi-Wan frowned. “And you don’t think it’s a bit unfair to take favors from a Professor like that?”

Anakin was suddenly full of rage. “It’s not like I get favors from anyone else! I don’t have an adopted dad or a mom. I have a cousin who barely knows me and the second someone’s nice to me, my best friend questions it!”

He was seething now, the magic around him turning dark.

“I’m sorry, Anakin. I didn’t think. I know you don’t...look, I’m really sorry. I just worry about you. I want to look out for you.”

Anakin was calming down a bit, remembering breathing techniques that Qui-Gon had taught him. “I don’t need a guardian, Obi-Wan. I need a best friend.”

“I know, but that was the deal right? When we bonded? You said we’d always be able to look out for each other. That’s all I meant. I know you’re a good person and you deserve good things.”
Anakin deflated. “Ok, yes, you’re right. We look out for each other. But I’m keeping the broom.”

“Fine,” Obi-Wan said, mostly mollified. “Open the other one then.”

Anakin had almost forgotten about the other package. Pulling back the plain brown paper he found a small stone bowl with a flat bottom. There was nothing particularly special about it except the carvings in the sides which were a bit unsettling. They depicted canine heads, foaming at the mouth.

“What is it?” asked Anakin

“Not sure...it looks like a pensieve but smaller and definitely different....We should have Qui-Gon take a look at it.”

“No. I mean, maybe later. It’s late and I wouldn’t mind some sleep.”

Obi-Wan was a bit tired as well and looking forward to his book on Animagi, so the boys parted ways.

Anakin stayed up late that night, unable to sleep. He had placed the two-way mirror on his nightstand along with the mysterious stone bowl. Before he dreamt, his last thought was that Professor Palpatine was perhaps a lot like himself. Someone who had been used to being alone and misunderstood.

Elsewhere in the castle:

Palpatine stood over his empty cauldron, feeling weaker than ever. He would have to move his plans forward as his body was starting to fail at an alarming rate. Before long the Headmaster would recognize the signs of his ill health for what they really were. Thankfully the old fool had caused just the distraction he needed to cut his thumb. The boy had willingly, though not knowingly, taken part in his plan three times now. And he had accepted the Iriasieve. He could feel the boy’s trust in him growing. The ritual was working, establishing their bond, and soon it would be a matter of time before completion.

Palpatine pulled the stopper out of a potion on his mantle and downed the whole thing. It was unpleasant, but a small price to pay for maintaining his current body. He looked forward to shedding this brittle body for good.

Obi-Wan and Anakin were enjoying a final game of Exploding Snap in the empty Great Hall. The train should be pulling in and they’d soon be bombarded by friends and housemates demanding to swap stories of the holidays.

Ahsoka ran into the Hall first, practically body slamming Anakin as he stood to hug her. Barriss came in not long after, nodding coolly to her friends and pretending to examine her fingernails. Petro and Lux had stories of lavish vacations, and Tyzen was still excited about seeing his first live Quidditch game that wasn’t a school match.

Later that night, walking by the lake with Ahsoka and Barriss, Anakin told them about the gifts from Professor Palpatine. (He hadn’t told anyone about the gift from Obi-Wan as it felt too personal, like something just between them.) Ahsoka was torn between suspicion and friendly jealousy, but Barriss was more thoughtful on the matter. “It’s not unheard of for Professors to give small gifts to students who are particularly good in their classes, but something like that is certainly out of the norm. I’m not
saying give it back,” she read Anakin’s facial expression. “But keep your eyes open. Gifts like that almost always come with strings. And Palpatine is the kind of man who you know likes having puppets around.”

Anakin didn’t reply but he was angry. Where did people get off constantly questioning the man who hadn’t done anything wrong? He expected better from his own housemate.

He was getting ready for bed that night when he noticed Artoo attempting to push the stone bowl off of his dresser. He shooed her off and she hissed violently at him.

“What’s your problem?” He asked the blue-eyed cat. She hissed again and gracefully jumped off the dresser and trotted out of the dorm.

Anakin didn’t know why everyone seemed to be turning against him somehow. He loved his friends but they needed to understand that maybe he needed someone like Professor Palpatine. After all, Obi-Wan had Qui-Gon. It wasn’t any different.

Drifting off to sleep he never noticed the stone basin with the rabid dog head carvings begin to swirl with black mist.

He dreamt of large ash trees, their roots all tangled together, and a bright stone in the soil, sinking deeper into the earth as the roots grew and spread.

Obi-Wan thought of himself as a fairly rational and observant person. So noticing Anakin’s increasing displays of anger had him worried. As did Palpatine’s behavior. Going from cloying to kindly grandfather set off alarm bells, and Qui-Gon always told him to listen to his instincts.

So he found himself in his foster father’s office, trying to explain his concerns.

“And it wasn’t just the broom! He gave him this...bowl thing. It looked like a pensieve but it wasn’t. It was made of dark stone and had a tall brim, with these angry looking dogs carved around it.”

Qui-Gon considered this information. “I’m not sure what that object might be, but I have some theories. I’ll look into it. I didn’t want to get you involved in this because you’re very young and you’ve already lost so much.” Qui-Gon gave the boy a steady look. “But I have suspicions about Professor Palpatine as well. Nothing I can name or give evidence to, yet. So I need you to not tell anyone of this, understand?” The Hufflepuff boy nodded solemnly.

“So you noticed Anakin doing anything odd? Besides the anger and the change in how he sees his Head of House?”

“Odd like what? I mean he still studies, does well in class, flies like a maniac,” Obi-Wan recounted out loud. “That’s why I think, well I think we need to meditate together again. When we did that, we actually really saw each other. Not just our physical forms but our magic and energies. If something’s wrong with Anakin and you and Madame Che haven’t found anything, I think that’s the best way to find out.

The Transfigurations Professor regarded his charge thoughtfully. The small boy who used to be so angry at the world for his loss was growing into a thoughtful and bright young man.

“I believe you’re right. But we need to do so carefully, and without the Headmaster’s knowledge.” Qui-Gon finally replied. “His stance on your bond is that we ignore it until we no longer can. He is wise in many ways, but in this I think it is important to listen to those most affected by the bond.
He’ll be away on business with the Wizengamot in late February. We’ll have to wait until then. Otherwise it’s quite likely he or the Castle would sense magic of that kind.”

Obi-Wan nodded, still a bit shocked that his guardian was so blatantly going around the Headmaster’s orders. He idly wondered if Qui-Gon was lying about having been in Gryffindor and had actually been in Slytherin.

He wasn’t sure if he could wait until February, but he had no choice. He needed to know that his friend was really alright. Until then he’d do everything he could to stick by Anakin’s side.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter's a bit on the short side but STUFF is happening! If you're curious about the stone bowl, look up the greek goddess Lyssa. Might get some itty bitty spoilers though. Thank you so much for reading. I love comments and kudos. Suggestions, constructive criticism, something you do or don't like or don't get why it's in there, I love it all so thank you for commenting!
Padmé was waiting nervously at the library entrance. She was supposed to meet Anakin and Sola for a study session for Potions. This time of year focus on the inherent properties of plant families tended to throw a lot of first years off. It was mid January and she wanted to make sure her sister and friend were prepared for quizzes the Professor liked to surprise students with.

She sighed knowing her little sister was already feeling the pressure from their family. The Amidalas held a lot of political clout. Her mother was on the Wizengamot and her father was on the Gringotts Council. Both of their daughter were expected to rise to similar ranks if not surpass them, and she knew Sola, more prone to sensitivity to that pressure, would struggle with it.

But beyond being worried for her sister, she was worried about Anakin. Ever since students had come back from Winter Holidays, he had been more withdrawn, more prone to anger. She had been so worried she had discussed this with Obi-Wan, who told her in confidence about the Slytherin’s growing anger and distrust of his friends. And more worryingly his trust in Professor Palpatine. Padmé knew the professor was talented, but why he was at Hogwarts was a bit of a mystery. He’d been there for less than five years, and while he was a Potions Master, before Hogwarts there was almost no information about him. He had attended Beauxbatons but no transcripts were available, no awards or graduation on record.

Padmé wasn’t a Ravenclaw for nothing. When the older man had started showing a strange amount of interest in Anakin, she had gone into research mode. Every instinct she had told her the man was up to something, and she, Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka had agreed to keep an eye on their friend and the Potions Master.

Thinking of her younger friend, he appeared around the corner, tie a bit crooked and robes hanging a bit off from running from the DADA classroom, most likely. Sola was right behind him. He grinned, Potions book under his arm. “Ready?” He asked, coming to a stop and halting just in front of her.

She giggled at the exuberance the boy had. “Sure, come on.”

The three made their way to a corner in the back of the library. Starting with the four classes of fungi, they settled in with hot chocolate Sola had smuggled from the kitchens. Only pretending to disapprove, Padmé took a mug.

“Professor Palpatine can’t really expect us know the interactions of all classes of fungi with branch roots by the end of the week, can he?” Sola asked, pushing back a lock of dark hair and frowning at her text book. “I think I understand the principles but the specific interactions seem like a bit much.”

“He’s just making sure we’re prepared for next year. And that we don’t blow up another cauldron like that Gryffindor did. Twice.” Anakin said defensively.

“You didn’t used to be on Palpatine’s side ALL the time,” countered Sola, arching an eyebrow and looking very much like her sister.

“Things change,” Anakin replied, anger rising a bit. “He’s not a bad guy, people just don’t like him because he’s smarter than most people and they know it.”

Padmé gave Sola a warning glare and took a moment to collect herself. “I’m sure he is intelligent,
Anakin, but that doesn’t mean we should trust him implicitly. I looked into his past, and there’s almost nothing there! No mentions in Potions Journals until just before he came to Hogwarts, his family history is so vague that it’s suspicious. How did he become Head of Slytherin if he didn’t even attend Hogwarts? There are questions we can’t ignore just because you like him.”

Anakin felt rage building in him white and hot. He pushed back from the table and the stone Obi-Wan had given him for Christmas fell out of his pocket. He snatched it up quickly, and just as quickly the rage he felt dissipated. He was reminded of Obi-Wan’s calming presence in magic, the warm yellow of his friend safe and inviting, and his own form of greens and blues.

He looked up and shook his head to try and clear his mind. “You’re right. I’m sorry, I- I don’t know why I acted like that.” The stone seemed to pulse warmly in his hand and he slid it back into his pocket. “If this was anyone one else, I would be suspicious. So you’re right, Padmé. We should be finding answers about who he is. I just haven’t been feeling like myself lately. It’s hard to explain.”

“Boys think puberty is confusing. Pfft. Try being a girl.” Sola scoffed.

“No, but I’ve seen you start going through puberty.” She grinned impishly.

“Anakin, if my sister goes missing, hold off the Aurors so I can have a 24 hour head start.” She was sure her face was bright red.

Anakin was laughing madly. “I make no such promises.” he managed between fits.

Anakin was laughing madly. “I make no such promises.” he managed between fits.

The study session wore on and Anakin made a note to be more grateful for friends like Padmé and Sola who were both rational and caring. Living with Slytherins, it was a bit of a nice change of pace.

That weekend marked the second quidditch game that Slytherin would be playing, and the first Anakin would be playing with his new broom. Bruck was no longer on the team, so a fifth year girl named Kass had been added. During practices she had proved a much faster Chaser than Bruck and she was a team player, so Anakin felt good about the odds. They were facing Hufflepuff, whose Seeker frankly didn’t stand a chance against Luminara. The game went smoothly, with Slytherin racking up points from quaffle scores and the opposition’s Keeper only blocking about half the goals.

Less than an hour into the game, Anakin noticed he was having problems controlling his flight path. The wind was particularly brutal that day, so he chalked it up to that and continued chasing the quaffle.

The crowd roared, signaling the Snitch had appeared on the field. It sped off past the Slytherin Keeper and towards the castle, circling back and heading straight for Anakin. Anakin tried to make way for Luminara to dive in, but the Snitch kept heading for him. He ducked, wildly thinking he was the only player to ever run away from a Snitch. He was flying towards the opposite end of the field, and still the Snitch raced after him. Glancing back he realized it wasn’t an ordinary Snitch. Along with the humming bird-like wings, two wickedly sharp blades gleamed. Luminara was catching up.

“No!” He shouted at her, but either not hearing or too focused on winning, the Slytherin Seeker grabbed the golden ball and immediately screamed in agony. She fell to the ground, barely controlling her broom. When she landed in a heap in fetal position, every play was gathered around her. The Snitch was motionless, but now four blades sharper than any Anakin had ever seen lay near her hand, several fingers severed completely from it. Anakin thought he may be sick.
“Back away! Everyone, back away!” Instructor Tachi’s voice rang out. She and Madame Che were rushing towards Luminara, as was Professor Palpatine. Anakin moved back but he couldn’t look away as Instructor Tachi conjured a stretcher and Madame Che carefully used her wand to place Luminara’s fingers in a sealed container.

Master Windu used a Sonorus charm on his voice. “All students, back to your dorm rooms NOW! Stay there until further notice.”

Heads of House and Head Boy and Girl rounded up students and everyone went back to their dorms. Obi-Wan passed Anakin in the chaos and have his hand a brief squeeze, for which Anakin was very grateful. Anakin’s mind was reeling. Obviously someone had tampered with the Snitch, tried and succeeded, in seriously injuring a player. He needed to talk to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. And Padmé. She always seemed to have a better idea of what was really going on.

When he got to his dorm and pulled his curtains around his four poster, he reached for his two-way mirror. “Obi-Wan” He said into it. Obi-Wan’s face appeared. “We need to talk tomorrow, but not just us. Meet at the usual spot before breakfast?”

“Of course. I’ll see you then. Be safe.”

“You too.” The mirror returned to an average looking piece of glass.

Then he scribbled a quick note on a piece of parchment. It read ‘meet tomorrow before breakfast at the usual spot. Tell P to come too.’ He looked at Artoo. “Hey girl,” he stroked her ears. “I need you to give this to Ahsoka in the Gryffindor tower. Can you do that?”

Artoo gave him an indignant look as if to suggest he was slow for imagining that she couldn’t do it.

“You’re the best,” he gave her a last affectionate rub under her chin before she was off.

Anakin had nightmares that night. They were becoming more and more frequent. Finally he woke screaming to a hand on his shoulder. He calmed when he realized it was just Tyzen.

“You were yelling quite a bit,” the boy said. “Rough nightmare?”

Anakin nodded though he couldn’t quite remember it. Something about blue lightning.

“I have them too. Sometimes I put up a noise-proofing charm around my bed. You alright?”

“Yes, I think I’m okay now. Thanks, Tyzen.” The boy smiled and went back to his own bed.

Anakin put up a noise proof charm but it was useless as sleep eluded him for the rest of the night. The stone bowl on his bedside table which he’d nearly forgotten about grew darker, it’s mists swirling more rapidly.

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Morning was a welcome relief from the previous night. Dressing quietly and heading downstairs before anyone of sound mind was awake, Anakin made his way to the spot by the lake that was ‘theirs’. Padmé and Ahsoka were already there.

“Hey SkyGuy, so what brings us out here on this freezing morning while we should be sleeping?” She half joked, but Anakin knew his friend valued her time in bed greatly.
“We have to wait for Obi-Wan first,” he replied. Said Hufflepuff was jogging towards the lake and stopped as he approached the group.

Anakin nodded to him. “Okay, the match yesterday,” he began. “Someone obviously tampered with that Snitch. Someone in the school.”

“Yes,” agreed Padmé, “but to what end? To hurt Luminara? It was barbaric but she’s recovering just fine from what I hear.”

“I don’t think it was meant for Luminara,” Ahsoka chimed in. “Did you see the way the Snitch was practically stalking Anakin? He was trying to dodge it but it kept going for him.”

Obi-Wan agreed. “Yes, but as Padmé said, to what end? It would have hurt Anakin badly but nothing that would have permanently injured him.”

“I hate to be the one to say it,” Ahsoka said with reluctance, “but Palpatine got down to the pitch really fast for a man who’s been having trouble getting around the castle.”

Again Anakin felt the rage build in him. “He was just trying to help! He’s our Head of House and Luminara is his responsibility!” He could feel the magic being drawn towards him, tinting with darkness.

Obi-Wan put his hand on Anakin’s shoulder and the Slytherin boy took a deep breath. “Okay, okay.” He sighed. “It was a bit odd. At Christmas Obi-Wan and I had to help him to his room and he has looked ill for some time.”

Padmé filed the effect that Obi-Wan seemed to have on Anakin away for later. Her attention was averted as a new figure approached the group.

“Barriss, what are you doing here?” Anakin asked.

“You’re not as stealthy as you think Skywalker. Plus I know you’re talking about Luminara, and she’s my family. Whatever you four know, I need to know. Keeping my family safe is my responsibility.”

No one could begrudge her that point. “We don’t know much,” Ahsoka said. “Only that we think the Snitch was intended to hurt Anakin and that Professor Palpatine may be involved somehow. But we don’t have any solid leads or proof.”

Barriss seemed to consider this. “He has been acting differently towards you, Anakin. He stopped being so overbearing and started acting like he’s your grandfather. But if growing up in my family has taught me anything, it’s that kind of favoritism comes at a price.”

It was a shrewd way of putting it but Anakin couldn’t exactly refute it. He wanted so badly for Slytherin to be a home, a good home, but maybe all homes had their own sets of rules and problems. But what could the end game be for the Potions Master? Obi-Wan said that Qui-Gon always pushed him to trust his instincts.

Thinking hard, Anakin considered what his options were. He could go to the Headmaster, but with no proof nothing would be done. Confronting the Potions Master at this point was out of the question. Too many unknowns. Professor Jinn would listen. And he had a meditation session with him that afternoon. It seemed like the best bet.

“I’ll try and ask Professor Jinn about it today,” he told the group. “He won’t say anything to other Professors and he trusts me and Obi-Wan.”
“It’s likely our best option for now.” Padmé agreed. “Best to be spreading out,” Barriss said. “Breakfast starts soon and we don’t want to explain to any Professors why two Slytherins, a Ravenclaw and a Hufflepuff are hanging out in the snow on a freezing morning.”

They split off at different intervals with Obi-Wan and Anakin going into the castle last, since no one would think it odd if they were seen together so early.

Before they got to the Great Hall Obi-Wan stopped them. “Anakin, I don’t know what’s happening, but I will do everything I can to help you. Please trust that.”

Anakin opened his mouth to say of course he had always trusted Obi-Wan, but remembered his outbursts from earlier. “I will.” He responded gravely.

That evening in Professor Jinn’s office, the Transfigurations Professor could practically feel the nervous energy emanating from Anakin.

“Before we begin, tell me, Anakin, what has you so worked up?”

The boy took a deep breath. “It’s about Luminara. I mean not just her, but things that have been happening lately. The Snitch that she caught, it was meant for me. It was practically stalking me from the second it appeared on the pitch. And Professor Palpatine...Ahsoka mentioned that even though he’s sick, he was one of the first people near Luminara when she landed. And he’s been acting strangely towards me. I don’t know what any of it means, and I feel like my mind is playing tricks on me. One second I’m angry about something, and the next, I can’t remember why I’d ever be angry about that thing in a million years. It’s like something inside me is shifting and I don’t like it.”

Qui-Gon listened intently and took a moment to digest the boy’s words before he responded. “I think you are a very wise young man to listen to yourself so thoroughly. No one knows your inner self better than you do if you listen, and it’s a lesson that takes many people lifetimes to learn. As for the Snitch, that has been a constant topic of conversation among the staff. Even though Ms. Unduli is expected to make a full recovery, the results could have been much worse. But we have yet to find any hard evidence tying the incident to anyone. Instructor Tachi has assured us that only she had access to the Quidditch equipment that day.”

The man pushed some errant gray hair behind his ear.

“As for Professor Palpatine, that is a very complex question. Myself and others have noticed his odd behavior and failing health. I promise you that will keep an eye on him. In the mean time, I suggest we meditate about it.”

Anakin agreed, but he had another question. “Professor, I think it’s time for me and Obi-Wan to meditate together again. I know the Headmaster doesn’t like the idea, but Obi-Wan saw the real me too, he’s connected to it, I mean me. If anyone can for sure see if something’s wrong, it would be him, right?”

Qui-Gon smiled one of his rare full smiles. Not the half smile that was accompanied by a mischievous spark in his eye but a real beaming one that pulled at his crow’s feet and laugh lines.

“I think that would be wise. Obi-Wan has made the same suggestion to me. There is a time next month that I can arrange for that to happen. But for now, let’s focus on your breathing and inner assessment.”

Content with the deal, Anakin settled onto the pillow he thought of as ‘his” and let his breathing sync with Qui-Gon’s.
In the Dungeons:

Palpatine clutched his mug and scowled. The early stages of the ritual should be working faster than this. Even without the ingredient that the bladed Snitch was supposed to procure, the boy should have been seeking him out regularly. He knew the Firasieve was in place. He would feel it if it wasn’t or the boy had broken it. Yet Skywalker had only come by his office once during the holidays and while it had been productive, the bond which he had hoped would be established now was nowhere near completion.

He would need to act faster. It wasn’t quite time for drastic action but it was certainly time to have plans for such actions in place if need be. He sat back and began to consider possibilities.

Days later in the library:

The early weeks of February were slogging by, and Anakin was already annoyed by the giggling around the castle concerning the 14th of February. He had very much hoped that wizards wouldn’t hold to such nonsense. He and Ahsoka were trying to study and a table of third year Hufflepuff girls to their left. Would. Not. Stop. Giggling.

Finally, unable to concentrate on her Astronomy essay, Ahsoka stood and approached them.

“Hi,” she said, smiling sweetly. “I couldn’t help but notice that your brains seemed to have melted to goo under the influence of some tacky paper hearts. If you could move this out of the library the rest of us would very much appreciate it.”

Despite being older, the girls immediately paled and packed up their bags.

“How did you do that?” Anakin asked, slightly awed.

“You haven’t really met my mother,” she grinned. “Plus one of them has a younger brother in our year. My Confringo spell nearly set his robes on fire. But serves him right, he shouldn’t have been trying to jump around corners and scare people with lame bat-bogey hexes”.

Anakin looked at his friend in new appreciation. “You are scary. And you have the snippiest attitude ever.”

“And you just now notice,” his friend smiled.

Barriss soon joined them at the table, Sola in tow. “Finally, people who aren’t obsessing over hearts and flowers.” Barriss sighed. “Nice show, Ahsoka,” she nodded towards the Gryffindor who smiled in thanks.

“This morning some Hufflepuff boy tried to practically shove a rose in my face.” Sola frowned. “He didn’t even say hello! Are boys just incapable of basic social niceties? No offense intended, Anakin.”

“None taken. That’s why I’m with you all. Lux and Petro have become obsessed with finding Valentine’s dates. It’s painful to be around.”

“What Hufflepuff boy?” Barriss asked Sola, narrowing her eyes.

“The one with the twin in Gryffindor.” She replied, rolling her eyes in recollection.
“Ah, Cody,” Ahsoka said. “He’s nice, just a bit um, awkward.”

“I could hex him for you,” Barriss offered casually, prompting Sola to laugh.

“I think I can handle a boy with a flower, but thank you.” Sola smiled.

That night Anakin curled up in bed with his Charms book, but his thoughts were elsewhere. Valentine’s was a stupid holiday, and he was glad his friends thought so too. He wondered what Padmé and Obi-Wan thought about it. They were a bit older, but they weren’t giggling like those annoying girls in library were. A thought stuck him. What if Obi-Wan liked Padmé or vice versa? What if they liked each other? Something about the idea sat badly with him but he wasn’t sure why.

He put his Charms book away and opened his journal. It was a gift from Qui-Gon who had suggested he write about his dreams and nightmares, help him organize his thoughts when he needed it. He wrote some, but paging through the lined papers, he noticed that his thoughts were always decidedly worse at night. Under his question of why Obi-Wan liking Padmé angered him he noted this pattern. Sighing he tried to clear his mind. Sleep eventually found him but as ever, restfulness did not.

Chapter End Notes

Woo, another chapter up. First year is gonna wind up before too long. The years at hogwarts won't take equal lengths of time because...well, I don't get paid to write this and I gotta survive capitalism or whatever. Next update might be a bit slower as I have some kinks to work out and I'm trying to get a second chapter up on my other Obikin fic, The Middle Path. So also check that out if you have a sec. As always, thank you for reading and comments and constructive criticism/feedback are always very much appreciated and welcomed.
Valentine’s Day was nearly at Hogwarts, and Anakin found himself in a dour mood. A few girls in his year had made a point of looking at him in the corridors and giggling, but he always caught bits of conversation like “scar” and “chosen one” from them. It was maddening. When he wasn’t in class or eating, he’d found an abandoned classroom on the 4th floor where he liked to tinker with spells and practice wandless magic in peace. And generally avoid the endless laughter of girls. He wished all girls were like Barriss and Ahsoka. Level headed and a bit scary when they wanted to be. Though when he saw Ahsoka and Obi-Wan walking down a corridor opposite him, laughing, something ugly twisted up inside him.

At least he had his meditation session with Obi-Wan to look forward to in a little less than two weeks. He didn’t know what he’d do if the Hufflepuff boy hadn’t been assigned his tutor. He still kept the stone Obi-Wan had given him at Christmas with him at all times. It seemed to anchor him when his emotions went towards dark places.

Anakin took his seat in Potions class and waited for Professor Palpatine to give the day’s assignment. As his Head of House stood in front of the class, Anakin thought he looked to be on Death’s door. “Today we will be making a mild sleeping solution. Safe enough to use on cranky infants, yet difficult enough to brew that a small mistake can result in dire and painful consequences for the brewer.” The Professor waved his wand and the ingredients and procedure appeared on the board. Anakin collected the ingredients from the cupboard while Tyzen set up their cauldron. Setting down the ingredients, Anakin flipped his text book open.

The class was going along well enough. Most of the students were half way through their solutions and at least not doing terribly. Professor Palpatine began walking the classroom, inspecting everyone’s work. Rex and his partner even earned a “not terrible” for their potion. Switching sides, the Potions Master examined the Slytherin students. He praised Lux and Petro for what Anakin considered mediocre work so far, but stopped in front of Anakin and Tyzen. “Ah, excellent, I can’t wait to see you two in my class next year. 10 points to Slytherin.” Anakin tried not to preen. They did have a very good potion. Palpatine headed towards the last row of Gryffindors and Anakin refocused his efforts on slicing the dreamfoil stems just so.

Suddenly there was an explosion. The ingredients in Ahsoka’s cauldron had gone everywhere, inflicting minor burns on her and surrounding students as a foul smoke filled the classroom. Palpatine waved the door open with his wand and quickly began disappearing the ingredients that had been launched around the room.

“Everyone,” the Professor called out. “Class is over. Please collect your things, and if you have any burns, please head to Madame Che in the hospital wing immediately. Ms. Tano, you stay here.”
Unharmed, Anakin stayed behind as well as the rest of the class rushed out.

“Ms. Tano,” the Professor said with quiet but deadly force. “I cannot fathom how you could be so careless. 50 points from Gryffindor!”

Instead of ashamed, Ahsoka looked livid. “That wasn’t my fault! That potion was fine until you walked by! It looked just like it should have and then you stood in front of it and boom! You sabotaged it!”

Anakin had never heard his friend so angry. Plenty of students exploded cauldrons. It wasn’t like Ahsoka to lose control over something like that.

“Ms. Tano!” the Professor raised his voice back. “I will not suffer your insolence. 50 more points from Gryffindor and two weeks of detention!” Palpatine’s eyes were flashing a dangerous gold in the dungeon torch light.

Ahsoka was so angry that tears were beginning to well up in her eyes. Anakin strode towards his friend, determined to smooth this out. Palpatine stopped him with a hand on his shoulder. Suddenly the old man looked tired. And really, why wouldn’t he be? He was a Professor, trusted by Headmaster Yoda. And a first year was accusing him of sabotage.

Nodding at his professor, he took Ahsoka by the hand and led her out of the classroom.

“I can’t believe that man!” she exclaimed once they were a safe distance away. “I know that potion! WE studied it last week! I couldn’t have blown it up like that! He’s up to something and we have to find out what.”

“Ahsoka,” Anakin said gently. “You just made a mistake. It’s ok, it happens. Tons of people have done way worse in Potions class. I know you’re hot-headed but calm down.”

Ahsoka looked at her friend disbelievingly. “‘Calm down’? That’s really what you have to say to me right now, is ‘calm down’?!” That man has had it out for Gryffindor and me especially all year, and you’ve never once come to my defense! You say you don’t trust him but then you act like his pet!”

Anakin was furious. He could feel the dark ball of rage in his gut. “I help you all the time! You’d have probably exploded a hundred cauldrons if it wasn’t for me! He’s a Professor, Ahsoka. He doesn’t have some grudge against you.”

“Oh, please!” the Gryffindor responded. “First term he was all over you, like he wanted to lay a carpet out under the feet of the ‘Chosen One’ every time you walked by. I’m telling you I saw him slip something into my cauldron and you won’t even consider believing me! You’re supposed to be my best friend!”

“How can I be your best friend when you’re always suspicious of me because you’re jealous?” Anakin saw red. “It’s not my fault that you don’t have any real friends of your own!”

Ahsoka’s features were warring between despair and fury. Finally she took a deep breath and said in a lowered voice, “You know, maybe those other Gryffindors were right. Snakes can’t be trusted. If that’s how you feel, oh Chosen One, you can stop considering me your friend.” She stormed off towards the Gryffindor Tower without looking back.

Anakin slumped against the corridor, collecting his thoughts. He was only trying to be fair. He wasn’t sure how it had all spiraled so far out of control so quickly. He heard a pair of feet shuffling towards him.
“I couldn’t help but overhear your encounter with Ms. Tano.” Professor Palpatine said. “I am sorry to hear that she gave in to her distrust of you so quickly. It is an unfortunate position that Slytherins so often find themselves in.” He put a comforting hand on Anakin’s shoulder. “If you ever need to talk, my door is always open.”

“Thank you sir,” Anakin replied, feeling a bit better. “I’d best be going or I’ll be late for Charms.” He smiled weakly at his Head of House.

As he headed towards the moving staircase Palpatine smiled contentedly to himself.

Anakin found himself unable to concentrate for the rest of the day. Ahsoka wouldn’t look at him in the other classes they shared and at lunch he barely said a word. But his resolve that he had been in the right and that Ahsoka was jealous at not being as good at Potions as him was solidifying. Perhaps he had been naive when he first came to Hogwarts, thinking House politics were a silly matter like Muggle sports teams.

Instead of going to the library after dinner, Anakin went straight to his dorm room. And as it was a Friday he could even spend the rest of the weekend alone if he wanted to. The prospect sounded appealing. As he was closing the curtains around his bed, intent on an evening of being left alone, he noticed a note at the foot of his bed. All it said was “Need to talk? Kitchen entrance at midnight.-O” Anakin was a bit puzzled. Usually Artoo carried notes between them in the school, but Obi-Wan was well liked by the House Elves who could pop in and out of anywhere in the castle as they pleased. And Artoo was likely off hunting mice around the castle. He shuddered, hoping she wouldn’t bring another dead one back to his bed.

A late night scone and a talk with Obi-Wan was exactly what he needed. He glanced at his watch and noted he had about three hours until midnight. He also noticed he was still wearing the sapphire and lapis bracelet Ahsoka had gotten him for Christmas. He unclasped it and tossed it into the bottom of his trunk.

He was nearly nodding off into a textbook when he realized it was fifteen til midnight. He made sure his dorm mates were soundly asleep and snuck out the Common Room entrance. He had made it past the Potions classroom and was about to ascend a small staircase that would lead to the Kitchen corridors, when he felt a presence behind him in the magic. Before he could turn around he heard the familiar voice say quietly “Petrificus Totalus!” And Anakin fell to floor completely paralyzed. His Potions Professor soon stood over him with a nasty smile.

“There are consequences for being out after hours, you know,” the old man drawled. “But seeing as you are Anakin Skywalker, I do believe those consequences will be quite different. Mobilicorpus! Anakin was being levitated at a height just near Palpatine’s elbow. They were moving back towards the dungeons. Anakin couldn’t see much from his petrified point of view, but he could tell they’d gone well past the Slytherin dorms and Potions rooms. Palpatine stopped in front of a medieval looking painting that looked to depict something from the Spanish Inquisition. “‘Maleficarum’ He said and a passageway opened into a wide room with arched ceilings.

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“Hardly anyone knows of this room’s existence, you know.” The older man said conversationally. “I had to dig through many tomes before I could be sure that it did. It’s rumored that Salazar Slytherin built it himself.” With a swift flick of his want Palpatine dropped Anakin to the floor. Still petrified, the boy could only look at the ceiling and bits of statues in his line of sight. His heart was racing as panic was setting in. “I have been watching you for a very long time, Skywalker. Ever since I gave you that nasty scar.”

Anakin’s mind froze. He couldn’t possibly...The Dark Lord was dead. Yoda himself had burned what was left of his body. The monster who had slaughtered his mother, Obi-Wan’s parents,
hundreds of wizards and muggles, he had to be dead.

“Yes, yes, I’m sure it’s a shock to you now. But there are ways of delaying death if you’re careful enough to find them before the need arises. And you, my boy, you will be how I evade it for a very long time to come. I could have ordered my followers to kill you, but why destroy an asset like that? No, the time has come to make full use of you. And don’t worry about your friends.” He stopped to cough wetly. “That Gryffindor girl certainly won’t be questioning your whereabouts, and the note you thoughtfully had delivered to the Hufflepuff urchin and the Ravenclaw brat to let them know of your desire for a peaceful weekend alone will do just the trick.”

Anakin couldn’t see the old man, but it sounded like he was pushing something into place against the back wall of the chamber. He approached Anakin again and levitated the boy, moving him towards the back end of the room. Directing him with his wand, he forced Anakin into a standing position with his arms out. Shackles bit down harshly above his elbows and wrists. Palpatine ended the petrifying curse and Anakin was standing against a stone wall on a slightly raised platform. The shackles were bolted directly into the stone wall and gave no leeway. Soon matching restraints held him in place at the knees and ankles. He would not panic, he refused to panic. Panic was useless and he would force his logical mind to override his instinct to scream and cry like a toddler.

“It would have been fun to draw this game out longer, to truly sow deep seeds of hatred between you and your friends, but my time in this body is limited. Though you were remarkably compliant with the initial stages. I must thank you for that.” He said all this as he crossed the room, gathering phials of substances Anakin was sure he didn’t want to know the contents of. “Your first quidditch match and that potion I gave you. That was the first key. Well, the second after your scar. And that thick-headed Gryffindor provided the perfect opportunity. You see that potion is exceedingly rare. Ash root is the primary ingredient, but not any ash root. THE ash root. From the World Tree. The moment you sipped from that flask, we were bound.”

Anakin struggled against his shackles to no avail.

Palpatine continued. “Then you accepted two more offerings from me. The chocolate contained crushed Knotweed, collected under a full moon. The third offering was more difficult. You see, you had to ingest my blood willingly.”

Anakin thought back. “Christmas!” he nearly shouted. “You cut yourself at dinner, you put your blood in your drink and then when we toasted made sure it got into mine.”

“No, very clever. Such a shame to only realize it now. For you at least.”

“What next?” Demanded Anakin, his anger rising. “What are you going to do to me now?”

“Patience, patience,” he paused to cough again. “Rituals this powerful aren’t done in a day. You have ingested my blood, and now I must ingest yours.” He drew a knife from inside his robes, the blade a dark copper and the handle seeming to be made of bone.

Fear gripped Anakin as Palpatine approached. The man cut the section of robe covering the boy’s right arm away, then pressed the tip of the blade into the center of his forearm, just below the inner bend of the elbow. He pressed it in deep and Anakin flinched, gritting his teeth. He drew the blade roughly four inches downwards, prompting a steady flow of blood. Looking down, Anakin hadn’t noticed the basin on the floor under his right arm. Most of the blood collected there.

Looking back up at Palpatine, the man’s features had changed he looked shriveled, his skin a sickly gray color, his eyes bloodshot and yellowed. He lifted the blade to his mouth and licked Anakin’s blood from it. Anakin felt something inside him shift. Some part of him felt like it was shaking loose
from his very being.

“You feel it too,” the thing Anakin now thought of as a monster said. “This ritual is ancient. Forbidden by those like your Headmaster. You and I were first bonded by your scar. Then by the World Tree, and now by blood. Soon, we will be one. Your spirit will wither under the force of mine. And I will shed this body and emerge as Anakin Skywalker.” He grinned in a way that made Anakin wonder how he had ever thought this man an ally.

He tried gathering as much magic as he could to himself, determined to incapacitate the old man. As soon as he tried though, he found every nerve in his body wracked with pain.

“Ah, ah,” the monster grinned again. “There are ways to cut wizards off from magic. Potions that block energies and dull the senses, enchantments that cut into the meridians through which magic flows. Your power won’t help you here.”

Anakin thought desperately of any form of help. He’d even left his Merlin-damned wand in his dorm. No Professor would be looking for him on a weekend, Palpatine would make sure of that. Ahsoka hated him, and he deserved it. Shame flushed through him at the thought of their fight. He knew now why he’d said those things. They had been deep in him only as a dark part of him he knew not to trust. Palpatine had brought them to the front, made them the focus in his mind. Padmé was supposed to meet him tomorrow, but the notes that the old wizard had sent…

Obi-Wan. Obi-Wan might be able to sense him if he tried to meditate. He’d have to wait to be left alone though. The monster had said the ritual would take time. More than one day. He couldn’t stay in here with Anakin the whole time, otherwise staff would wonder where he was. Assuming he didn’t bleed out before the old man left. His arm was still draining steadily into the basin which was almost full. Anakin wasn’t sure what time it was. There were no windows but it must have at least been between an hour and a half or two hours. His body ached from being anchored to the wall.

Palpatine was casting wards about the room. He then drew diagrams on the floor with white chalk. Anakin watched helplessly as he traced complicated patterns on the stone floor and muttered under his breath. The process seemed to go on forever. Finally the old man stood, and lifted a bowl of what appeared to be salt. He threw the salt around the rooms, sometimes carelessly and sometimes with great attention. There was an unused alter that he moved to the opposite side of the runes, facing Anakin from across the room. He produced candles from a dark corner of the chamber and placed them on the alter. Finally lifting a bust with great effort and placing it in the center of the granite alter. The bust faced Anakin and it was unpleasant to look upon. The bust had two faces pointing in opposite directions. With a white votive candle on either side. In the center of the bust, directly facing Anakin, was a length of rusted chain draped between the faces.

After all this effort, Palpatine seemed exhausted. He approached Anakin again, carefully avoiding the runes and salt. “And now I must take my leave, young Skywalker. Dawn will be here soon and my presence at the Great Hall must not be missed. But not to worry. I’ll be back before the waxing moon crests tomorrow night. Oh, and this.” He took his wand and sealed up Anakin’s bleeding arm. “Can’t have you dying when I need that body in top condition now can we?”

With great care he took the basin of blood and exited the room, leaving Anakin alone, weakened from blood loss, and terrified for his life.

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Elsewhere that night in the Castle:

Obi-Wan couldn’t sleep and he couldn’t put his finger on why. Unlike his Slytherin friend, he
usually had no problems fall asleep shortly after his head hit the pillow. But something was off. He’d heard about Anakin’s fight with Ahsoka that day. While Ahsoka herself hadn’t wanted to discuss it, Barriss had gotten the details and Obi-Wan couldn’t believe his friend would behave like that. He and Ahsoka were as close as blood siblings. He wished he’d been able to meditate with Anakin that day. Whatever he was feeling, he knew it had to do with his friend. He glanced at his clock. Barely half past midnight.

He sat up in his bed and cast a lumos, letting his thoughts drift. The fight had happened after Potions. Potions meant Palpatine. And Palpatine meant untrustworthy. Obi-Wan was of a mind that the Professor had sabotaged Ahsoka’s potion, but why? What would a rift between them gain for the Slytherin Head of House? He sighed. Anakin hadn’t spoke to anyone at dinner and had gone straight to his dorms, but Obi-Wan needed to talk to him. He picked up his two-way mirror. “Anakin” he said to it. The mirror remained an average mirror and his unease increased. “Anakin! It’s important!” he whisper-shouted into the thing. Still no answer. It was possible he was asleep, but Qui-Gon said to trust his instincts and when it came to the Slytherin boy, his instincts had yet to be wrong. This meant something was very wrong and action needed to be taken. Now.

Sliding out of bed and throwing on his robe and shoes, Obi-Wan scrawled two letters and left his dorm for the kitchens. As soon as he entered Winky waved at him holding a wooden spoon and wearing a large smile. “Master Obi-Wan!” the House Elf greeted. “How are you? Would you like some treacle tart? Winky is knowing it’s your favorite, Sir.”

“No Winky, I’m not here for food. I need to ask a very important favor. Actually, two very important favors. I think my friend is in danger.”

“Winky can help you go to the Headmaster! He can help your friend!”

“No Winky, the Headmaster can’t help us with this. You’re the only person I can trust.”

Winky puffed his chest out with pride. “Winky will do anything Master Obi-Wan needs!”

“Thank you, you’re a good friend.” Winky wiped a tear at that. “I have two letters I need delivered to students in different Houses right away. This one,” he held up “needs to go to Padmé Amidala in the third year girls’ Ravenclaw dorm. And this one needs to go to Ahsoka Tano in the first year girls’ Gryffindor dorm. You need to wake them both up and make sure they read them right away, understood?”

Winky nodded emphatically. “Winky will do this right away, sir!” And with a pop he vanished. One task completed, Obi-Wan left the kitchens and headed to the third floor corridor where a handful of staff had personal quarters. He stopped in front of the unicorn tapestry hanging inconspicuously around a bend in the hall. “Lanternarius” he said and the tapestry parted and allowed him entry into a living room with a plush gray couch and a set of cozy burgundy chairs. Occupying one of the chairs was his father, a book open on his lap and a mug of tea in hand.

“Obi-Wan, what brings you here at this hour?” Obi-Wan loved Qui-Gon for many reasons, one was that he was never quick to anger.

“Something’s wrong. Anakin’s in trouble and I can feel it. I don’t know how to explain it but he’s in danger. A lot of danger. I didn’t know where else to go.”

Qui-Gon nodded at his charge and guided him to the sofa. Obi-Wan told him about the fight with Ahsoka, the lack of response from the two way mirrors, the likelihood that Palpatine had done something to sabotage Ahsoka. And Qui-Gon listened intently and patiently.
“Have you tried reaching out through your bond yet?” The man asked.

“No, I haven’t been able to concentrate well enough to meditate. But I can feel distress that I know isn’t mine. I just can’t feel where it’s physically coming from.”

The Professor took a moment to think. “Is there a way we can check to see if he’s in his dorm?”

Obi-Wan should have thought of that when he was sending the notes to Padmé and Ahsoka. Gods, why hadn’t he thought of that? Before he could continue berating himself, a searing pain went down his right arm. He cried out, clutching his arm which looked fine but felt as though it has been sliced open, and deeply at that.

“I think we have confirmed that Anakin is not in his dorm.” Qui-Gon said. “But I will send a House Elf to check. Once we have two sources of confirmation of Anakin being in the danger, we will go to the Headmaster. Blinky!” A House Elf popped up in front of Qui-Gon. “Please see if Anakin Skywalker is in his dorm room. Report back to me immediately.” Blinky nodded and vanished in an instant. Not five seconds later he was back.

“Master Skywalker is not in his bed or common room, Sir. Is Sir needing anything else?”

“No thank you, you’ve been of great help.” And Blinky was gone again.

Obi-Wan was fighting panic. “He’s in trouble, I knew it. He has to be wherever Palpatine is, right?”

“Not necessarily,” the older man replied, stroking his beard. “It depends on his intentions towards Anakin. And if he doesn’t want to be found, a House Elf wouldn’t be able to find him. Come, we’ll seek the Headmaster.”

As they reached the gargoyle guarding the Headmaster’s Office, they found Padmé and Ahsoka already waiting for them. “What’s this?” Qui-Gon asked, raising an eyebrow at his foster son.

“When I figured Anakin was in trouble, I knew I had to cover all bases possible. The more people looking for him and sharing information, the better.”

Qui-Gon smiled at the boy. His boy. “You’re thinking under duress is highly commendable.”

“You really think it was Palpatine’s fault that Anakin said those things?” Ahsoka asked, looking slightly ashamed.

“I do,” said Obi-Wan. “But what we don’t know is why.” Ahsoka nodded.

“Let’s go up then,” Qui-Gon said. “Dustbunny” he said and soon the entire group was standing before a very concerned looking Headmaster. His thick white eyebrows were drawn over his almond shaped eyes. Though old, nothing about the man’s gaze spoke of senility or failing strength.

“Headmaster,” Qui-Gon began. “We have reason to believe that Anakin Skywalker is in grave danger. House Elves have confirmed he was not in his bed and the bond we discussed...Obi-Wan has been feeling great emotional distress and physical pain through it.” Ahsoka and Padmé looked confused at the mention of the bond but kept silent.

The Headmaster pulled out a large sheet of parchment from underneath his desk and gazed at it for several minutes. “Hm, Skywalker and Palpatine have not left the castle, but they are not in it either.”

“What? How is that possible?” asked Obi-Wan.
Padmé spoke up for the first time. "The rooms in Hogwarts that can be put on maps are the stagnant ones that can’t change. Like the Great Hall, the dorms, the Library. There are lots of rooms that can change though. Especially if they’ve been abandoned for a long time."

Headmaster Yoda gave the girl an appraising glance. “Yes, very true. They must be in such a room, and Skywalker would not be able to access one alone. I believe, given the circumstances, he was taken by Palpatine.”

“So how do we find him?” asked Ahsoka anxiously.

“Through the connection that Obi-Wan and Anakin have,” he said with finality. “I was foolish to try and dampen their bond. It was what the magic willed, and I did not listen. But we must hope their bond is still strong enough to find Anakin.”

“What bond? What do we not know?” Padmé questioned. Qui-Gon answered. “Anakin began meditation session with me to help control his wandless magic and emotions. Before Christmas, I suggested he and Obi-Wan meditate together, as they could aid each other in focusing. I didn’t realize how strongly connected to magic Anakin is. How he practically exists as part of it. Through his connection, both Obi-Wan and Anakin reached saw their presences within magic itself.” Padmé gasped. “They...reached for each other and almost instantly formed a bond. Bonds of that nature are rare. Hardly ever attempted these days because they are dangerous and not many wizards have the raw power to form them. But Anakin and Obi-Wan did without even meaning to.”

“Wow,” Ahsoka said, mostly to herself, her stare distant.

“Two children formed a magic bond on accident?” Padmé was beside herself. Not much threw the collected girl off, but this was...it was a magic so ancient and deep that many scholars considered it lost to the modern world.

“Yes,” the Headmaster answered. "And now we must use it if we are to save Anakin."

“What do I need to do?” Obi-Wan stood tall and approached the Headmaster.

“Meditate. Find your place in the magic and seek out Anakin through your connection. Follow me.”

Headmaster Yoda led them through a series of rooms into one that looked out on the grounds and contained nothing but a view of the cold night sky and several large cushions on the floor. “In here you will meditate. It is wise that you brought your friends. You will need their help.”

“But we can’t meditate and we don’t have bonds to anyone;” Padmé said.

“No, but Professor Jinn and I will meditate with Obi-Wan. We will help boost his power. You can do the same. Give Obi-Wan something positive to anchor him through this.”

The girls nodded and took seats on either side of Obi-Wan, with Professor Jinn and Headmaster Yoda taking a seat on either side of the girls, completing the circle in the small room.

“To meditate, simply allow unnecessary thoughts to fall away. Focus on good times the four of you have shared. Other thoughts may come, but that’s alright. Let them slip away and know they are not important. Are we ready?” Professor Jinn queried.

Getting affirmative nods, the room went silent as first Qui-Gon and Yoda, then Obi-Wan leveled their breathing and focused on connecting with living magic. Ahsoka and Padmé exchanged nervous expressions and closed their eyes, trying to think of the best times and parts of each other and Obi-Wan and Anakin.
Obi-Wan found his connection to living magic easily enough. He centered himself in it, thinking only of Anakin. Suddenly the boy’s signature appeared to him. But it was different. Wrong. There was a dark presence in it, twisted and gnarled, reaching for something else outside Anakin and the magic itself. Towards some kind of horrible void. He tried to stay calm. He had found Anakin. That was the first step. He wasn’t sure how to communicate like this but he had to try. He pushed his own presence out towards Anakin’s, touched it briefly. He was instantly flooded by fear, by pain, anger and shame. His heart stuttered but Anakin was alive. He held on, trying to convey comfort, that they were going to find him. He focused all his mental energy towards his friend. ‘Anakin. I’m here. Where are you?’

In the dungeons of the castle, Anakin stirred from a state of barely being conscious. Something warm was near him. Warm and good. He closed his eyes and focused. In the back of the mind he could hear words. ‘I’m here, where are you?’

Obi-Wan! Obi-Wan must be reaching him through the bond. Had had thought he was cut off from that like he was from all magic, but maybe if it was coming from Obi-Wan, the enchantments and curses wouldn’t work.

He focused on his magic. Not trying to manipulate it, but just focusing on where Obi-Wan’s presence was touching his. ‘In the dungeons’ he focused as hard as he could. ‘Not sure where, behind a painting.’ This was difficult. Blood loss and being chained to a wall made thinking about anything fairly daunting. Describing the painting would take too much work, and there were so many in the dungeons. He pictured in his mind’s eye the horrible portrait of a beheading they’d stopped in front of and tried to push that image through the connection.

‘A painting?’ he received back, a note of hope in his friend’s thoughts. His connection was getting harder to maintain. He thought of Qui-Gon, Padmé, Ahsoka. Tried to feel their energies feeding his own. It worked. The connection stabilized. Suddenly he saw exactly which painting.

‘Yes’ he was fading back into unconsciousness. This was taxing and he suspected his shackles were meant to drain him as well. ‘Hammer’. His thoughts were swimming. He couldn’t hold his head up on his own. Darkness overtook him.

In the Headmaster’s tower room, Obi-Wan shot up. “He’s being held in a room behind a painting in the dungeons. The one of the beheading, just before the corridor that leads to west side of the lake. We have to hurry. I think he’s lost consciousness. I understood the painting then he said ‘hammer’ the connection ended.”

The others leapt up as well. Qui-Gon addressed the room. “All three of you stay here. Whatever is going on, it’s extremely dangerous. Is that understood?”

The small group of students all nodded.

Qui-Gon and Yoda left, Yoda moving faster than Obi-Wan would have thought possible. As soon as they could be assured the wizards had made it well past the gargoyle statue and towards the dungeons, they looked at each other. “So, we’re totally going,” Ahsoka stated, flipping her beaded braids behind her shoulder.

“Of course we are,” agreed Obi-Wan.

“They don’t know what they’re up against either, and he’s our friend. Everyone have their wands?” Padmé asked.

Receiving affirmative replies, the three left the Headmaster’s office and quietly made their way to the
dungeons. The passed the kitchens, moving silently and stopping periodically for Padmé to cast detection spells. They grew closer to where Anakin was, and more nervous as they did. Obi-Wan tried to reach through their link but there was nothing.

Anakin wasn’t sure what time it was but he was awakened by Palpatine re-entering the room. He lit the candles on the altar. That was almost certainly a bad sign. He wasn’t sure if he had dreamed talking to Obi-Wan or not. He hoped it had been real.

“Good to see you awake, boy. The penultimate part of of the ritual must take place now. First blood, now flesh.”

Fear gripped Anakin like a cold hand around his heart. The monster was carrying a basin, the same one that apparently still held Anakin’s blood. He placed it in the center of the runes he’d drawn previously.

Suddenly he stood, looking suspiciously towards where the entrance to the chamber was. He grinned maliciously. “Looks like someone may be trying to intrude.”

Gods, Anakin hoped so. Palpatine left the room but Anakin could hear nothing from outside. Minutes later he came back in, dragging the unconscious form of Qui-Gon Jinn. Despair seized the Slytherin boy. Palpatine tossed his body to the side and Anakin prayed the man was still alive.

“Foolish man,” he continued as though nothing had happened. “Once I have your strength, I’ll dispose of him, too.” At least that meant Qui-Gon wasn’t dead.

Anakin wanted to scream, to yell, but now the thought that it would make things worse for Qui-Gon held his tongue. And he could barely lift his head as it was. Palpatine re-positioned the basin and brought the copper and bone knife out from earlier. He stood in front of it. Through his muttering Anakin could make parts out. “The supplicant presents the gift of his flesh, freely given” Then the old man placed his hand on the basin at an odd angle. He pressed the knife against his hand, angling it so it would cut off the left thumb and forefinger. Anakin shut his eyes. He couldn’t see this. He heard Palpatine scream as his finger fell into the stone basin. The candles around the altar erupted in flames that nearly reached the ceiling. He continued. “For great knowledge to be bestowed a gift is always given. The gift of what the lifetime of the supplicant has seen.” Holding the knife in his right hand, he raised it to his right eye. Anakin thought he might vomit. He shut his eyes tightly again but he heard the wet sound of it hitting the basin.

Anakin did scream then. Didn’t care how much drawing the magic hurt, he had to make this stop.

Padmé, Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka had been taking turns glancing down the corridor where Anakin was being held. They had seen Professor Jinn standing outside the painting, but he had vanished. They didn’t know where the Headmaster was.

“We have to do something now. Not just Anakin but Qui-Gon too is in danger. We have to try and get in.” Obi-Wan was panicking.

“And how do you plan to do this?” They all jumped at Headmaster Yoda’s voice. He was somehow standing right behind them. “I knew you would come. Especially you, Mr. Kenobi. But now I am
glad you did. You are right that Qui-Gon is in danger now as well. We must enter that room."

“It has to have a password,” Padmé said. “Obi-Wan, what was the last thing you said you heard from Anakin?”

“‘Hammer’” he replied. But do you think that could be it?”

“We have to try.” Ahsoka said, heading towards the painting.

“Hammer!” she said in front of it. Nothing happened.

Padmé stared at the painting. “It’s from the Inquisition, the painting I mean.”

“And?” Ahsoka was losing patience and Obi-Wan didn’t blame her.

“Malleus!” Padmé said. “Malleus Maleficarum! Maleficarum!”

The portrait swung back. The Headmaster led the charge into the room, knowing it would be useless to keep the three students out. He could only hope to keep them safe.

The sight that greeted them in the chamber was hellish. Palpatine had turned towards them, caught off guard. His right eye socket was empty and bleeding, much of his robes covered in blood. The two-faced altar was emitting a malevolent light, the candles on either side blazing high. The runes on the ground were pulsating with light. And at the end of the room as Anakin, chained to the wall, bloodied and pale, but alive.

“NO!” screamed Palpatine. “You will not destroy this!” He leveled his wand at Yoda. “Crucio!” he yelled. The Headmaster was more agile than he appeared, dodging easily and countering with an Expelliarmus. It missed but it unbalanced Palpatine. Ahsoka saw the opportunity and cast a Stupefy. It grazed the old man but did little damage. It did however turn Palpatine’s ire to her. As he readied a curse she executed an acrobatic roll towards him to dodge and landed a Confringo which set his robes on fire. Obi-Wan took a moment to assess the room. Palpatine had been standing over the basin it must be important. Despite being on fire, the wizard aimed a curse at Yoda. As the Headmaster cast an effective Protego he nodded at Obi-Wan, as if reading his mind. Obi-Wan focused his wand on the stone basin. “Expulso!” he channeled all his energy. The bowl went flying, shattering on impact against the wall not far from Anakin. The runes stopped pulsating and the candles extinguished themselves. “NO, no no!” Cried Palpatine, sinking to the floor. “You’ve ruined everything!”

He brought his bleeding left hand to his face, the knife having dropped to the floor as soon as Yoda had charged in. “What you have tried to do here is unforgivable.” Yoda said, calmly “You will not sit trial. You will be in Azkaban before noon.”

The shell of a creature on the floor began laughing. “No, I will not go to Azkaban. This is but one battle I am the Dark Lord. I am Insidious, and this is not finished.” With a swift turn he had his wand pointed at Anakin.

Obi-Wan knew what he would do. And he was closest. He couldn’t allow it, not while he still had breath in his body. Time seemed to slow. As the Dark Lord leveled his wand and drew the first syllables of the Killing Curse with his breath, Obi-Wan tackled him, making sure to get in front of the man’s wand. As the final syllables of Kedavra ended, Obi-Wan lay on the floor in between the Dark Lord and his best friend. The Headmaster cast a binding curse on the monster, but he was already gone. Empty robes left where a body had just been. The Headmaster freed Anakin while Ahsoka and Padmé gathered around Obi-Wan. Anakin couldn’t stand on own from muscle stiffness.
He could only slump to the floor..

“He’s breathing!” Padmé exclaimed over Obi-Wan’s body. Ahsoka ran to check on Qui-Gon.

“So is Professor Jinn!”

Everyone he cared about was alright, and Anakin knew he was safe now as well. He closed his eyes, fully expecting to wake up in the hospital wing. And two days later he did.

Chapter End Notes

Whew, so, long chapter. I almost cut it into two but decided it worked better as one. There's gonna be one more wind-up/epilogue chapter for Anakin's first year and then we'll be moving on to Year 2. If you have any burning questions, noticed any inconsistencies, either plot wise or in my writing, let me know. If you loved it or just liked it, please also let me know. This was a tricky one for me to write and I need your feedback like the deserts need the rain.
Anakin came awake to the sights of the all-too-familiar hospital wing. He closed his eyes again as memories came back to him. The note, the abduction, the fight with Ahsoka before all that. Obi-Wan finding him through their bond. He felt ill as he remembered the things Palpatine had done. So much blood. He never wanted to see a knife ever again. He glanced at his right arm. A thick scar ran the length of his forearm. Thinking of how Obi-Wan had found him, he reached through the magic to find his friend. He could still feel his presence, strong and safe. Anakin tried to send a feeling of gratitude through the bond.

Madame Che came in and looked to be on the verge of tears at seeing him awake. “Anakin, how are you feeling?” She placed a bottled potion on his bedside table next to several others.

“Tired.” Was all he could muster. And he was exhausted.

“That’s to be expected,” the Healer said sympathetically. “I need you to drink this. It’s a blood replenishing potion. Your body has already restored much of the blood you lost, but this will help you feel better sooner.” Anakin sat up, moving the pillows to support his back and swallowed the potion. It was unpleasant to say the least and he was reminded of Palpatine’s potion with the ash root that had connected them. Panic rose up in his chest suddenly. Was the man still alive? Were they still linked?

As if sensing his fear, Headmaster Yoda entered the room along with Professor Jinn. Anakin had a bizarre inclination to hug the Transfigurations Professor. The small statured Headmaster took a seat beside Anakin, Qui-Gon standing nearby.

“We are glad to see you awake and healing.” The Headmaster said. “Your condition was dire when we arrived. I am sure you have questions, as do we. Do you feel up to this conversation?” The old wizard’s hazel eyes were concerned but Anakin wanted this over as soon as possible. He took a deep breath.

“I can do it. Where do we start?”

“With how the man we thought was a teacher abducted you. Do you remember how that happened?”

Nodding, Anakin started. “He sent me a note, pretending to be Obi-Wan. I had a fight with Ahsoka after potions that day. It was because of Palpatine. He had sabotaged her potion and I wouldn’t believe her. So I went to meet Obi-Wan in the kitchens at midnight. I should have used our bond to make sure it was him, or at least our mirrors, but I was upset and didn’t think about it.” He tried to feel foolish for not confirming with their mirrors or the bond, but he didn’t manage it. Qui-Gon seemed to understand. He put a hand on Anakin’s shoulder.

“It’s not your fault, Anakin. Palpatine deceived us all. We let you down in that regard. As the adults, we should have recognized some sign of danger. And the ritual he was grooming you for would have turned your thoughts and feelings towards him.” Professor Jinn’s words did help a bit. “What happened after you went to meet him?”

“He stunned me, took me into that room, then chained me to the wall. There was a ritual he was
trying to do. He said the first steps had already been done. After my quidditch accident he was in the room when I woke up. He offered me a potion for the pain and I took it.” Anakin again felt shame. In hindsight he had been so naive to trust the man. “In that dungeon room he told me the potion linked us. It was made with some special kind of ash root.”

Headmaster Yoda bowed his head. “I was afraid of that. That is a very powerful binding spell. We know he was trying to take your body.” Anakin shuddered. He had come so close to doing just that.

“Are we, I mean, am I still linked to him? There were other things he did. At Christmas he slipped his blood into my drink. Could he still do...that to me? Destroy me like that?”

Qui-Gon put his hand protectively on Anakin’s shoulder again. “No, Anakin. Interrupting the ritual made the other parts of it null. Your scar is still a possible link, but that’s all. Palpatine is no longer connected to you.”

Anakin wanted to weep with relief. “But is he dead?”

Qui-Gon and the Headmaster exchanged a look. The Headmaster spoke. “No, he is close to death in some ways, but he is not dead, not gone. However he is very weak right now. His health was failing because ever since he gave you that scar, he hasn’t been as powerful as he once was. We think he did dark, dangerous things to keep himself alive. Wherever he is, those things are keeping him alive still. At least partially.”

He couldn’t fathom why anyone would do those things at the moment. He didn’t even particularly want to know what those things might be, so he pushed such thoughts to the back of his mind. He did have a question though.

“How did Professor Jinn end up in the room? Did you know the password?”

“No, I did not know the password. The Headmaster and I went to the corridor that Obi-Wan described, and I approached the painting while the Headmaster stayed back so we’d have an element of surprise with a second attacker if someone incapacitated one of us. Palpatine had warded the room. He sensed me outside and before I could stun him, well, he was faster.”

“But then the others...did he sense them too?”

“No, we believe that by that point he was too far into the ritual to notice or care about anyone being outside the room. He likely wanted to complete it as quickly as possible and then disappear. Ms. Amidala is to be credited with getting the Headmaster and your friends in. She quickly figured out the password from your message.” Of course Padmé had figured it out. And Ahsoka had come, tried to help him after he’d been awful. All of them had risked their lives for him. A knot stuck in his throat at the thought.

“We don’t know where Palpatine is now, but you need not worry for the moment. He is weak, wherever he is. I know you must be tired. Your friends have already recovered but Madame Che wants you to rest a bit before you see them. We’ll leave you to rest for now as well.” Qui-Gon said as he and Headmaster Yoda stood to leave. Anakin could only nod. He was too tired for more questions. He logically knew he was safe but the feeling of being nearly worse than killed, at someone else’s mercy, left him feeling vulnerable. Alone now in the hospital wing, Anakin cried. He cried in relief that he was alive, in mourning for the sense of safety he had lost, in guilt and gratitude for his friends, in shame for his behavior and foolishness. He cried for a very long time, and finally fell asleep, feeling lighter.

When he woke again on the next day, it was to the sight of Obi-Wan slumped in the bedside chair
and Ahsoka and Padmé sitting on the floor, leaning against each other and also asleep. He sat up in bed and shook Obi-Wan gently. His friend immediately looked up and grinned. They hugged each other tightly. If he hadn’t cried himself out yesterday, Anakin might have started again. When they broke apart, Obi-Wan spoke. “Think we should wake them up?” He nodded towards the girls asleep on the floor.

“Yeah, definitely.” Anakin smiled softly and Obi-Wan roused their friends.

“Anakin!” Padmé exclaimed. She stood quickly and ran to hug her friend. “We were so worried!” She exclaimed, pulling back only to immediately envelop him in another hug.

“I was worried about you all, too.” He spoke. “I can’t believe you all came to save me. And I heard that if you weren’t so smart and figured out the password I might not have been saved.”

The Ravenclaw girl blushed. “It was a group effort. Obi-Wan found you through the bond, I figured out the password, Ahsoka rushed in and started throwing curses at Palpatine like an Auror.”

Anakin looked around Padmé to Ahsoka who was hanging back. He turned towards his hopefully-still best friend.

“I’m sorry I didn’t believe you,” he started. “You were right, I was an idiot. Had been an idiot for a long time. I promise to do better by you if you don’t hate me.”

Ahsoka choked out a sob and moved in front of Anakin to hug him hard. “Of course I don’t hate you. You’d been poisoned by a Dark Lord all year. Professor Jinn told us how that probably changed your behavior.” She tightened her grip and Anakin could barely breathe but he didn’t care. “Friends forever, Skyguy.” “You got it, Snips.” He hugged back just as tightly. “I’m sorry, too.” Obi-Wan said. “I should have paid more attention, focused more on the bond when your behavior was out of place.” He ran a hand through his auburn hair in a frustrated gesture.

“No,” Anakin reassured him. “You did everything you could. You tried to set up a meditation session for us. It’s not your fault that Palpatine moved first. And besides, the Headmaster shouldn’t have tried to keep us apart like that. Next time I see him I’m gonna make sure he knows that our bond is ours. No one else decides when or how we use it.” Considering the manipulations not just of Palpatine but of the Headmaster in allowing the Houses to be so divided, in how issues of bullying were handled, an idea struck Anakin.

“I have a plan,” he told his friends. “To make sure the school is safer for everyone. But I need your help.”

“What kind of plan?” Padmé questioned.

“Ok, so here’s what I’m thinking.” The four students talked for hours, hammering out the idea. By the time Madame Che shooed them out of the hospital wing, it was nearly dark and they were ready to put things into motion. In the weeks to come they researched and networked. They had to be ready.

There was a feast in the Great Hall a few weeks after the shock of Anakin’s abduction and Professor Palpatine’s identity had passed. Many still refused to believe the Dark Lord was alive, and instead were saying that the Professor had simply been a dying old man who was desperate to continue living. But others were more prone to accepting the truth.

Potions class had been cancelled for two weeks before a replacement Professor was found, much to the relief of Anakin and the joy of the rest of the school.
At the moment everyone was gathered for said feast. The Great Hall was filled with the sound of talking and laughter among students. As the Headmaster reached the podium, silence fell. This was the first time anyone had officially addressed the events surrounding Anakin’s kidnapping.

“We are here to celebrate. But also to acknowledge the great sadness that one of our own students was almost killed by someone trusted by the school. Trusted by me. And I have great shame in knowing that.” The Headmaster bowed his head briefly. “But we are also here to celebrate the bravery of staff and students who stood by each other and prevented such a tragedy. To Professor Jinn,” Qui-Gon stood and approached the podium. “He listened to young ones, something that we all too often forget to do. He trusted their instincts and in doing so saved a life. He also acted bravely in approaching a Dark wizard. Please stand for Qui-Gon Jinn.” The entire student body stood and cheered for the man. He was well-liked by most students, but saving one of them confirmed how much he cared for the school and all of its students.

As the cheering died down and students took their seats, the Headmaster continued. “We also have our own students to thank. If you would please stand as I call your name. Obi-Wan Kenobi.” Cheering swelled again as the Hufflepuff boy stood. “For your trust in your fellow students and your quick thinking for rallying others to save your friend. 200 points for Hufflepuff.” Obi-Wan nodded, uncomfortable with being the center of attention of the whole school, even briefly. Yoda continued. “Padmé Amidala. For quick thinking in the face of great danger. 200 points for Ravenclaw. Ahsoka Tano.” Gryffindor erupted as the first year stood. “For unflinching bravery in the name of protecting others. 200 points for Gryffindor.” Ahsoka bowed her head in recognition and stood proudly. “And finally, Anakin Skywalker. For enduring great adversity. For fighting and enduring forces that have felled much older wizards. 200 points to Slytherin.” The entire Great Hall was roaring more than cheering.

Anakin looked to Obi-Wan and nodded. Then to Ahsoka, and then to Padmé. They were ready. They left their House tables and walked towards the head table and podium. As they did so the rest of the students hushed. Qui-Gon and the other staff were looking at them curiously. The stepped next to the podium, on the opposite side from where Qui-Gon stood, in the center of the room and facing the student body. Anakin looked at the Headmaster. “We have a few words to say, if you don’t mind.” Taken aback, Yoda nodded and with a flick of his wand the podium became large enough to accommodate the four students.

Anakin cleared his throat and screwed up his courage. “Three weeks ago I almost died. I almost died because I trusted someone who had been in the school for years. Who manipulated me for months.” The students and staff alike were dead silent. “If my friends hadn’t trusted me, if they hadn’t been brave and smart enough to trust each other and themselves, I would be dead.” He didn’t think the entire student body needed to know he would have been worse than dead. “I would be dead at the hands of not just a Dark wizard, but the Dark Lord.” Now there was buzzing in the audience. He tried to ignore it and kept going. “We have to do better by each other as Hogwarts students. We can’t allow House prejudices to keep us apart. I, Anakin Skywalker, last of the Skywalker line, invoke an Unbreakable Vow.” Gasps could be heard from nearly everyone in the Hall. He held his hand out to Obi-Wan who took it, who then took Ahsoka’s hand, who took Padmé’s. Anakin focused on getting the words right. “I vow to hold the well-being of my friends, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Ahsoka Tano, and Padmé Amidala above notions of House rivalry or differences.”

Obi-Wan spoke. “I, Obi-Wan Kenobi, last of my line, invoke and Unbreakable Vow. I vow to hold the well-being of my friends, Anakin Skywalker, Ahsoka Tano, and Padmé Amidala above the discrimination of House differences.”

Ahsoka straightened. “I, Ahsoka Tano, youngest of my line, invoke an Unbreakable Vow. I vow to stand by and protect my Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Padmé Amidala above House distinctions that needlessly and harmfully separate us.”
Padmé went last. “I, Padmé Amidala, oldest child of my family’s line, take an Unbreakable Vow. I vow to hold the trust and friendship of Ahsoka Tano, Anakin Skywalker, and Obi-Wan Kenobi above House rivalries.”

Anakin spoke again. “We were almost torn apart because of prejudices that were easily manipulated by a Dark wizard. That should never happen at Hogwarts ever again. Instead of House points, we ask for unity. We request that seating in the Great Hall not be enforced by House, and that a table specifically for inter-House meals be added. We ask for more assignments to be inter-House projects. For recreational and educational groups to be formed to foster stronger friendships between Houses. Instead of resenting each other, we should acknowledge the best of each other.” Anakin nodded at Luminara and she took her cue, standing. “House Slytherin is grateful for the bravery of Gryffindors and their willingness to undertake grave challenges for friends and allies. We admire the wit and intellect of Ravenclaw and their sharp minds and ability to innovate. We value the meaning of a Hufflepuff’s friendship and their sense of justice for all.” Barriss stood beside her cousin as she continued. “Slytherin! Do we agree?” The Slytherin table broke out in applause.

Ferus Olin of Gryffindor and of a very ancient lineage took a similar stand for his House who also cheered their assent. He was followed by Bant Eerin, Ravenclaw Prefect and Stass Allie, Head Girl of Hufflepuff.

As Anakin and his friends moved from the podium, he noticed that Qui-Gon looked extremely proud. The Headmaster’s face was inscrutable, but they had done what they needed to do. The Dark Lord would be back. Anakin could feel it in his bones. And they would all need to be ready to stand by each other, to know that the school was everyone’s family and no one should have to feel alone. Smiling back at Obi-Wan, Padmé, and Ahsoka, he was grateful for his family.

The June sun was blazing hot, making studying by the lake extremely uncomfortable. But end of year exams were nearly finished and then he had summer to look forward to. He’d be staying with Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan at the castle for the first month, and then at Qui-Gon’s home in the country. He would miss Owen but he knew that Owen was focused on his girlfriend, Beru, and trying to save up as much money as he could with extra shifts. Plus he was thrilled to get to spend so much time with his best friend, who promised that Qui-Gon could made the best food ever. That would be a huge improvement from cereal for dinner with Owen.

Ahsoka was going to be traveling with her mom but promised to owl lots of postcards. Padmé and Sola would be traveling with their parents as well, but they were less thrilled to be brought along on dull business and networking trips. Anakin promised to work with Padmé on pranking strategies to get them through.

Laying back in the grass, surrounded by his friends, Anakin allowed to let himself feel hope for the future. The ordeal with Palpatine had scarred him in more ways than one. The nightmares, the inability to use a knife for even simple tasks in Potions, the knowledge that he would one day have to face the Dark Lord again; it would have overwhelmed him if not for his friends being there for him. He closed his eyes in contentment even as he was sweating through his robes, and looked forward to summer and the year to come.
And that concludes Year One. Hope you liked the ending. Might be a week or so before I start second year. I want to get a couple more chapters of my other SW fic, The Middle Path up. As always, please comment with anything you liked, didn't like, didn't get, etc. I love comments and hearing back from you all means the world to me.
Anakin Skywalker and Year 2 of Hogwarts

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Summer was coming to an end, and for once Anakin desperately wished it wouldn’t. He felt like the last few months were like living in a dream. Spending mornings helping Qui-Gon around the house, learning magic from him, and meditation. The bond he had with Obi-Wan was stronger than ever. They had telepathic link which they’d actually had to learn to shield against when they wanted privacy. And they’d been successful for the most part, aside from when one of them was particularly upset. Like during one of Anakin’s nightmares. Anakin slept in the room across the hall from Obi-Wan. But everytime one of his nightmares hit particularly hard about being kidnapped, stuck in that dark room with the blazing candles, Obi-Wan was there by his bedside as soon as he woke. It was an immense source of comfort and Anakin would miss it when they were back at school and stuck in separate dorms.

Pushing away such thoughts he landed beside his friend, their one on one quidditch game having ended. Both boys leaned up against a tree near Qui-Gon’s small home, breathing hard.

“You could totally be a Chaser for Hufflepuff.” Anakin told his friend matter-of-factly.

“Maybe I’ll try out this year, give Slytherin some competition,” the older boy joked.

Anakin smiled at that. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught a rustle in the grass. The black and white pattern making its way to him at ground level was a welcome presence. The adder came closer and Anakin extended his hand, allowing her to climb up.

‘Greetingsssss. Are you well, Masssster?’ hissed the little snake. She was only about fifteen inches long and Anakin adored her. She’d made her burrow in Qui-Gon’s yard and they’d been fast friends.

“You of all people would make friends with a venomous snake.” Obi-Wan said not for the first time and with affection.

‘Very well, thank you Threepio.’ Obi-Wan had been confused about the snake’s name when Anakin found her and Anakin had tried to explain that it was the closest human translation he could pronounce. He’d told Threepio that they were leaving soon for school, and she was still carrying a grudge about not being able to go. She thought that if Artoo could go then she certainly could.

“She’s a good friend,” Anakin said, letting her settle around his neck. Qui-Gon had advised him to not to let anyone know that he could talk to snakes after finding Anakin walking into his kitchen in late June with Threepio curled around his arm. Apparently talking to snakes was a rare gift among wizards, but some considered it a sign of darkness. Anakin didn’t understand how anyone could consider Threepio a sign of darkness, but Qui-Gon’s advice was always good. “Are you already packed for tomorrow?” He asked Obi-Wan.

“Aside from a few books, yeah.” The Hufflepuff responded. “You?”

“ Mostly. Gonna pack up those old radio parts Owen sent me and I think that’s it.” Obi-Wan rolled his eyes at that.

“Hey, I’m gonna learn why technology and magic don’t work together, and when I figure out how to make it work, I’ll be rich!”
“Or you’ll fry yourself with a combination of electricity and and magical energy.”

“You need to think bigger, Obi-Wan.”

“You need to think about explaining yourself to the Healers at St. Mungo’s.” The older boy was grinning now. “Come on, we should wash up before Qui-Gon asks us to help with dinner.”

Anakin stood, asking Threepio if she wanted to come in. She declined and slithered off to catch her own dinner.

Obi-Wan got to the bathroom first, so Anakin made sure his trunk was packed. He added the broom he’d got for his birthday, a joint present from Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon and a welcome change from the one Palpatine had given him. He had his other presents from Ahsoka and Padmé. A sneakoscope from Ahsoka and a book on famous Chasers from Padmé. Barriss had sent a small fortune’s worth of chocolate frogs and Tyzen had given him a biography of Salazar Slytherin which he planned to start soon. Lux and Petro had given him a rather expensive looking dragon pendant that was supposed to glow if enemies were near. He wasn’t sure if he’d be wearing it much as it seemed to defeat the purpose, but it was thoughtful.

He’d miss having Obi-Wan to himself, but he couldn’t wait to see Ahsoka and Padmé again. Their parents hadn’t been sure whether they were impressed or horrified that their children had made Unbreakable Vows in front of the entire school. Though Padmé had mentioned in a letter that her father seemed unduly pleased with how it could ‘set her up to the youngest Minister of Magic.’ All the letters from his friends were folded neatly at the bottom of his trunk. He’d had a few friends before Hogwarts but not like this. Not real friends. He heard Obi-Wan leave the bathroom and enter his room. Tonight would be their last family dinner night with Qui-Gon and all three of them would take the train in the morning. He moved to grab a towel and take his turn in the shower before helping with dinner. He left his trunk open near the window and never saw Threepio crawl into it, finding a very comfortable spot for herself between his winter jumpers.

The next morning was bright and clear, a perfect fall day. All three residents of the Jinn Household had eaten breakfast and were ready to go with packed trunks. Qui-Gon had obtained a Portkey and they’d all be going straight to Platform 9 and ¾ directly at an appointed time, so as not to crash into other people who were Portkeying in.

Anakin looked at the brick on the floor dubiously. He was sure it would transport them to where they needed to go, but how was a different matter. He could have asked but figured he’d find out one way or another.

“Ten seconds,” Qui-Gon warned. “Five,” he continued the countdown. On “one” he reached for the brick at the same time as Anakin and Obi-Wan.

Anakin had thought the rides at theme parks were fun, but his was amazing. It reminded him of being little and spinning around as fast as he could just so he’d fall down. He couldn’t be sure how long it lasted but when he realized he was on the platform, Qui-Gon was standing looking dignified while Obi-Wan was in the process of standing up from the heap in which he’d landed. Anakin must have been the last one through, as he was still floating a few steps down to the ground.

“Very graceful, Anakin, you’re a natural.” Qui-Gon beamed.

Anakin smiled back, ignoring Obi-Wan’s grumbling protests of “we’re not all named Skywalker.”
The Transfigurations professor hugged them both then went off to find the other teachers taking the train. Anakin was about to ask if they should go ahead and get a compartment when he heard a very loud, “Skyguy! Obi-Wan!” The petite Gryffindor girl with braids came hurling towards them and it took both of them to intercept her hug.

“Snips!” Anakin yelled back even though he was practically holding her up.

“Good to see you, Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan said after she’d released them. Both boys waved to Ahsoka’s mother who was watching from afar.

“Come on,” She said practically bouncing on her toes. “Let’s get a car before they get taken.” Obi-Wan and Anakin exchanged exasperated grins before following her.

Once they had all settled in, a knock came on their door. Ahsoka opened the door to see Padmé’s face, smiling brightly. She too was given what Anakin had just dubbed the Ahsoka Bear Hug, and settled in with her friends. “Some of the Ravenclaws wanted me to sit them, but all they talk about is politics and got quite enough of that this summer.” She huffed as she stowed her belongings away. Artoo, already out of her cage, hesitantly sniffed her and settled into her lap.

“I’d go nuts if my mom was a politician,” Ahsoka said. “It’s bad enough she’s a Healer. I get lectures on not using a spell before I understand it constantly.” Padmé smiled sympathetically.

“Sorry to bring it up,” ventured Obi-Wan, “but do you know what the word in the ministry is about you know...everything that happened last winter?”

Everyone turned to Padmé. The newspapers had been almost totally silent about it. And no one was using the term “Dark Lord” at all. Even though Anakin had been trying to avoid the papers all summer, he found it odd that such an event wasn’t being discussed by the Ministry or public.

“Well, the Minister won’t talk about except with a very few close advisers. He thinks it would cause panic if people knew a Dark Lord infiltrated the school. He also doesn’t think that he was there for long. The story is that the Dark Lord used a Polyjuice potion to make himself look like Palpatine after he’d killed him.”

“But that’s not true at all!” Anakin said, livid.

“I know, but that’s what’s going around at the highest levels. Mom thinks the Ministry is more corrupt than most people realize. She and dad had big fight about it.” Padmé soothed Artoo with gentle scratches from where she’d become upset at Anakin’s outburst. “But I think the Headmaster has been telling people the truth, when they’ll listen, and he has a lot of clout in the Ministry. You’re not supposed to know any of this of course,” She looked around and three heads nodded in agreement. “But over the summer Dad invited this guy from the Ministry over. He’s very high up, Chief Secretary to the Minister. His name is Dooku. Anyway, he had dinner at our house and he kept talking about how Yoda is just a doddering old fool who’s fine for children but really doesn’t have any business being in the Ministry at his age, how he exaggerates just like the students do, and Dad ate it all up. But if he’s that high up and is controlling the narrative of what happened this year, it doesn’t mean anything good.”

“Yoda’s sharper than most people half his age,” Ahsoka said indignantly.

“I agree. Just...if you hear about him, be warned. I have a really bad feeling about that guy.”

Everyone nodded before turning to talk of the coming school year, Quidditch, and holiday plans that hadn’t involved politicians.
Ahsoka and Padmé agreed that Obi-Wan really should go out for Quidditch this year, Padmé agreed that trying to blend technology and magic was reckless but Ahsoka immediately volunteered as co-researcher and engineer for the project. A ridiculous amount of Chocolate Frogs and Pumpkin Pasties were purchased, and Ahsoka was beside herself that they’d have a Potions Professor who “wasn’t a judgmental, favorite-playing, psychopath from hell.” The whole car was unanimous in that at least.

The announcement that they’d soon be reaching Hogwarts was made and everyone slid their school robes over their day clothes. Despite the sugar binge, Anakin was quite looking forward to the Welcoming Feast. He could hear Qui-Gon calling for First Years as they disembarked and he followed the rest of the student body to the carriages waiting for them.

“What are those things?” Anakin asked.

“You mean carriages?” replied Ahsoka.

“No, the things pulling them. I’ve never seen anything like them.”

“Thestrals,” Padmé supplied. “I’ve read they look a bit like undead horses with wings. Though you can only see them if you’ve seen death.” She finished quietly.

“Oh,” Ahsoka said, looking at her feet and squeezing Anakin’s hand.

“It’s alright, Anakin, I can see them, too.” Obi-Wan smiled sadly at his best friend. The ride to the castle was quiet. Anakin was a bit nervous but he kept reminding himself that nothing like last year could happen. He’d be safe, they all would. Hell he’d get to join dueling club this year and learn how to really protect himself. He’d learned a lot already from Qui-Gon who’d been sympathetic to his newfound desire to know defensive and offensive spells.

Obi-Wan nudged his shoulder, able to feel that his friend’s thoughts were a bit jumbled. “Nothing but Quidditch and dueling this year, right?” He smiled and Anakin smiled back.

The Sorting that year was much less stressful as he wasn’t involved with it. The Hat sang of looking deep to find what your heart truly wanted to seek, and Anakin clapped politely for his new Housemates. He was also relieved that he was no longer a First Year. No more being outsmarted by a staircase or having to get used to password rotations. Everyone at school knew him now too, so hopefully he’d get stared at less.

Headmaster Yoda made mention that the dungeons levels below the Potions classrooms and Slytherin Dorms were off limits to students. It wasn’t as though Anakin had any desire to go back down there. Then he’d introduced the new Potions Master. Professor Avara Tahl stood, to the clapping of many. She was a dark skinned woman with odd, almost reptilian eyes and Anakin was curious what kind of Professor she’d be.

He was pleased to see that Luminara was Head Girl. Barriss even seemed happy for her cousin which was an achievement in and of itself. As he walked to the Slytherin dorms, stuffed and sleepy, Barriss and Tyzen chatted amiably. “No way,” Barriss was saying. “As long as we have Anakin here, we’re bound to at least be contenders for the Quidditch Cup.”

“Too full, can’t think about flying,” Anakin groaned.

Barriss laughed. “You do rather resemble a bludger at the moment.”

“Ha ha.” He said dryly.
When they’d reached their respective beds Anakin took a moment to see what their schedule would be. Double Herbology first thing in the morning with Gryffindor would be nice. Though Lux was already complaining that it would make him dirty for the rest of the day. Anakin rolled his eyes at that and noticed Tyzen did the same.

He opened his trunk to get tomorrow’s clothes laid out. Setting his robe and tie on his bed, he went looking for his undershirt and button up. While he was digging through the layers, a surprisingly familiar head poked out at him. His eyes widened and he looked around to make sure no one else had noticed. Threepio slid out of his trunk gracefully and onto his bed. ‘Thiss room is nice, Massster.’ She hissed approvingly. Anakin quickly pulled two of the three curtains around the bed.

‘What are you doing here?!’ Lux and Petro couldn’t see him now and his back was to Tyzen.

‘Massster ssaid to ssstay, but I must protect Massster.’ Artoo sniffed at the adder and he swore he saw her give the cat-equivalent of an eye roll. ‘You were hurt before. Bad dreamssss. I will keep you ssssafe.’

Anakin wanted to be angry but honestly he was proud of her. He wasn’t going to say no to an extra security blanket when he was still having the occasional nightmare about Palpatine. ‘Thankssss’ he said gratefully and kissed her at the base of her skull. ‘There should be plenty of mice for you here. Jusst try to stay hidden.’ He sensed an affirmative from her and watcher her slither off under his bed. He hoped Qui-Gon wouldn’t be mad about his extra friend this year.

Lux and Petro were arguing about some quidditch match they’d gotten to go to that summer and were setting up a game of Exploding Snap.

“Game of chess?” Tyzen asked.

“Too tired, but definitely soon,” Anakin smiled. He was comfortable in his own bed, and this year was going to be better by default due to as Ahsoka said “lack of psychopaths.” He mentally checked in with Obi-Wan, getting a similarly sleepy and content response. He slid off into a comfortable and dreamless sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Bit of a short chapter but I had a hard time getting back into this with the other fics I have going. Next one will be longer. As always, I beg shamelessly for comments. Good, bad, point out typos, it all helps. Also if you want to follow me on Tumblr I'm at sjwerewolfinc or on Pinerest at avarand.
The greenhouses were overly warm for Ahsoka’s taste but she supposed it was better than the early morning chill outside. The group of Second Year Gryffindors and Slytherins were packed tightly inside, waiting for Professor Billaba. For once they weren’t segregating themselves so much as House groups. Ahsoka was standing in between Anakin and Barriss and Rex was trading Quidditch stats with Tyzen and Lux, though Petro was standing by himself, practically radiating distrust.

Finally Professor Billaba entered. The Professor was a slim Indian woman wearing a Bindi and sporting complicated looking braids. She smiled kindly and everyone’s conversations halted. “Good morning, class. I’m sure you’re all excited about starting your second year at Hogwarts, so welcome back. Now, for our first lesson of the year I’m going to take a somewhat unorthodox approach.” There was murmuring from the students at that. “Instead of caring for magical plants today, you’ll be learning to defend against some of the most common aggressive species. If you’d all follow me outside, please.”

As they walked back out into the morning chill Anakin looked at Ahsoka. “Aggressive plants? Like venus fly traps?”

“Not quite, Skyguy. My mom loves her garden, but when you grow magical plants you can get magical weeds and pests. Some of them don’t take kindly to being removed.”

Coming up to where the Professor was standing, she gestured to two plant beds. One full of spiky looking bushes and the other full of eggplant-like pods that seemed to be vibrating. “On my right are Bouncing Bulbs, and on my left are Spiky Bushes. Bouncing Bulbs have limited use in potions, but today you’ll be trying to keep them from hitting you. Spiky Bushes with throw out short quills towards any creature that they think means them harm. Both can be defeated by a simple ‘incendio’. Now, I would like four Gryffindors to come over to the Spiky Bushes. Keep a safe distance, that’s it.” Ahsoka, Rex, Riyo, and a boy who Anakin didn’t know moved to the Professor’s left. “Now, Mr. Skywalker, Ms. Offee, Mr. Xebec, and Mr. Bonteri, please join them. The other half of the class, please move over towards the Bouncing Bulbs.”

As class got underway, many a quill was launched into students, most bouncing off robes but some piercing skin. Petro was slammed in the face by a Bouncing Bulb before he could get his Incendio off. All in all Anakin had a good time blasting plants with fire and he and Ahsoka both won House points for quick reflexes and creative dodges. He was less pleased with the two feet of parchment they’d been assigned on the properties of magical weeds, but he supposed that school couldn’t be just about blasting things with fire.

As they walked back to the castle Petro was muttering about being sweaty from “a pointless exercise in killing weeds.”

“Says the boy who nearly had his nose broken by a bulb.” Riyo chirped. Ahsoka fist-bumped her.

Transfiguration with Ravenclaw was next and Anakin was excited. Not just to see Qui-Gon but he’d read quite a bit in his text book over the summer and couldn’t wait to really start in on more than simple things like matches into needles, which he could do without his wand.

As they took their seats Qui-Gon-Professor Jinn, Anakin reminded himself, walked in. “Today will
be an exercise in Gamp’s Law. Specifically the First Principal Exception. Can anyone tell me what that is?” Anakin and Sola Amidala were the only ones to raise their hands. Sola was called upon.

“Food is the First Exception. It cannot be created from nothing or transfigured from a non-food source. It can only be multiplied from an existing source.”

“Excellent. Five points to Ravenclaw.” Sola beamed. Qui-Gon opened a sleeve of perfectly ordinary biscuits and instructed everyone to take one and pass the rest along. When everyone had a biscuit in front of them he spoke again. He demonstrated the spell and wand movement necessary for the assignment. “I want each of you to reproduce one copy of the biscuit in front of you. I don’t expect you to get it on the first try. Along with the correct wand movement and incantation, you need to focus your mind’s eye on willing a copy into existence.”

Anakin held his wand tightly but not too tightly. He closed his eyes, reaching for the meditative state he’d practiced so much over the summer but stopping short of it. He focused on the biscuit, on how easily and gently he could just allow another copy to exist. He had a feeling that forcing it would be futile, but feeling through the magic, allowing it to do what he wanted it to, working as part of it, that felt more natural for this spell. Opening his eyes slightly, he performed the four movements required of his wand and said with gentle intent ‘Effingere!’ He’d had a good feeling about the spell, but he hadn’t expected four more biscuits to appear on his first try. Barriss who was seated next to him was staring. “Way to go, Skywalker!” Lux said from behind him. Soon the whole class was staring and Anakin was a bit uncomfortable. Qui-Gon came to inspect his work.

“You seem to have a very strong gift with Transfigurations, Mr. Skywalker. Ten points to Slytherin. Would you mind helping students who may have a harder time?”

“Of course, Professor.” Anakin agreed quickly. He spent the rest of class helping students perfect want movements, urging them to focus for a few minutes or even more than that on what they were trying to accomplish, instructing them to let other thoughts fall away like rain drops like Qui-Gon had taught him. Sola was having a particularly hard time. He smiled and put his hand on her shoulder, telling her to breathe deeply and forget about being frustrated. She didn’t get it perfectly, but by the end of class she had conjured half a biscuit. “You worry a lot,” he’d told her. “The worry is blocking your intent, your magic.”

“I know.” She hung her head. “I just want to be as good as Padmé and that’s a lot to live up to.”

Barriss stepped in. “I know all about having to live up to your relatives. How about we practice together later tonight?” Sola smiled at that and agreed.

The rest of the day went by quickly. Anakin sat at the mixed-House table with ten or so other students for lunch and went through Charms and History of Magic easily enough. Professor Nu seemed to appreciate that he no longer questioned the motive of every historical conflict, but he thoroughly planned on addressing his concerns of non-Magical casualties in his essays.

After dinner he and Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, and Padmé met at their spot by the lake. Barriss and Sola were off practicing the Effingere spell. “I can’t believe you did so well with that Transfiguration spell, Ani.” Padmé was saying.

“Ani?” He asked raising an eyebrow.

“I mean, if you don’t mind. Of course I wouldn’t call you that if you don’t like it.”

“I guess from you guys it’s ok. Anyone else and I might have to hex them.” He grinned.
Ahsoka and Padmé left early, wanting to spend time with their housemates on the first day of classes. As it neared dark and curfew, Anakin and Obi-Wan walked back to the castle together in comfortable silence. Before they got too close Anakin remembered something he’d wanted to tell his best friend. “Oh! I almost forgot,” he whispered.

“What did you almost forget?” The older boy teased.

“I’m being serious! When I unpacked my trunk last night, Threepio was in it!”

“Threepio followed you here?! A venomous snake followed you to a school full of children?”

“She won’t hurt anyone! She said she came to protect me. I told her about my nightmares and she said she wanted to make sure nothing like that happened to me again.”

Obi-Wan sighed. “Well, I can’t fault her for that. But she knows to stay hidden, right?”

“Of course!”

Obi-Wan chuckled softly. “You attract the strangest company.”

“Says my best friend,” Anakin grinned cheekily as they continued their walk to the castle.

Once inside the Slytherin Common room, Anakin realized that every Slytherin was gathered there. He asked Tyzen what was going on. “Professor Tahl asked us to wait for her here, since she’s our new Head of House,” the boy said.

Moments later Professor Tahl entered the room and silence fell. “Good evening. Thank you all for being here. I apologize for not addressing you all last night but settling into Hogwarts has been quite a busy experience.” Her hands were clasped gently in front of her. She seemed to be looking about the room with her strange eyes but at nothing in particular. “I know that last year was deeply scarring for Slytherin. I want you to know that nightmares, anxiety, and other reactions are perfectly normal and that you can speak to me anytime about anything. I was a Slytherin here not so long ago and I understand how difficult it can be to always project the aura of independence and strength when prejudices against us exist despite our best efforts. My office hours have been posted near the Common Room password but I also welcome students to seek me out before and after classes.”

Anakin had a good feeling about Professor Tahl. Where Palpatine had set his senses on red alert, this woman had a soothing presence. The magic around her was calm with a curious and happy edge to it.

After Professor Tahl had dismissed them and Anakin had lost a game of chess spectacularly to Tyzen, he settled in for bed. He reached out to Obi-Wan through their bond. He told him about how he liked Professor Tahl, and Obi-Wan was glad that his friend had a Head of House he could trust. Settling in with Artoo on his pillow, stroking her soft fur with its odd white streaks and Threepio curled up happily under a smooth rock he’d brought and cast a warming charm on, he went to sleep easily once again.

It was midday and Anakin was heading to the dungeon with his house mates and the Gryffindors for Potions. He was excited to see how Professor Tahl would conduct the class. She wasn’t in the classroom yet so he partnered with Ahsoka, hoping they wouldn’t be split up. Rex and Barriss had also partnered up, invested in the solidarity that Anakin and his friends had risked so much for.
The Professor entered and seemed to glide to the front of the class. She granted five points to Gryffindor when Rex correctly answered her question about the Confusing Concoction they’d be brewing, which put the Gryffindors at ease. Anakin began setting up the cauldron while Ahsoka got their ingredients. He liked Tahl but there was something about her eyes...he’d never seen reptilian eyes in a human before. But that wasn’t it...there was something else.

As he and Ahsoka cut and diced and adjusted temperatures, Anakin realized they made a fantastic Potions team. They worked together seamlessly. Ahsoka really was talented with Potions and Anakin hated Palpatine all the more for trying to squash that talent. The Professor was doing rounds and making comments and suggestions. When she got to their cauldron she paused. “Excellent work here, both of you. Five points to Slytherin and five points to Gryffindor.” Anakin would have hugged Ahsoka if his hands were dripping with beetle entrails. Beside him, Ahsoka gasped. She was looking at Professor Tahl rather strangely. “I see you’re the first to notice.” The professor smiled strangely.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to stare!” Ahsoka said apologetically.

“No apologies needed. My eyes are quite unusual. Even more so for the fact that I’m mostly blind.” Anakin tried not to stare. That’s what had unsettled him a bit. Her eyes were just unique in appearance, but she didn’t use them to look at details the way other people did. Ahsoka looked on the verge of asking something but the Potions Master beat her to it. “I don’t need to use my eyes to know if a potion is correct. Smell, stirring to test for thickness, the energy around it, that’s how I can tell. Potions can also be deceiving. A deadly poison can be made to look very appealing. Not relying on one sense is an advantage to a Potions Master.” She winked and moved on to the next pair.

When class let out, Ahsoka was walking next to Anakin. “Coolest. Professor. Ever.” She said excitedly. Anakin had to agree.

Less than a week later Anakin was sitting at breakfast with Obi-Wan on a brilliant Saturday morning. His friend was finally trying out for Quidditch. “You’re going for Chaser and Keeper. You’re a brilliant flyer, you’re going to get one of them.” Anakin assured.

“And if you don’t, it just means Gryffindor will win the cup that much easier,” Ahsoka said around a mouth of toast.

“Seriously, mate. You have agility and focus. Hufflepuff would be mad to not put you on the team.” Rex added.

Barriss was pretending to not care about Quidditch but even she was going to watch tryouts. “We should get to the field if you’re intent on joining the ranks of jocks.” Obi-Wan smiled, appreciating the girl’s unique brand of encouragement.

On the pitch, Obi-Wan moved like water between the other players. He had no problem intercepting the quaffle or diving and twisting to keep it away from other players. The Hufflepuff Captain, a Sixth Year, watched appreciatively.

Rex cheered for Obi-Wan and for Cody who was also trying out for Hufflepuff. Anakin cheered the loudest for Obi-Wan, who flew extremely well as a Chaser and gave Cody a run for the Keeper position. Anakin had even brought and obnoxiously cheery black and yellow sign with Obi-Wan’s name on it.

After tryouts it was announced that positions would be posted in the Common Room right before
dinner. Tired and sweaty, Obi-Wan made his way to his room and showers.

Anakin was nervous about finding out whether or not his friend got the position. He hadn’t come down for lunch and Anakin didn’t want to pry by reaching through their bond since his friend’s shields were up. He spent the day studying with Tyzen and Ahsoka and playing Exploding Snap after his head felt full of dates of the Goblin Wars.

Finally it was dinner time. Anakin was bouncing on the balls of his feet, trying to catch sight of Obi-Wan and wishing he was taller. Finally the auburn haired boy came into the Hall. His face looked drawn. Anakin’s heart sank. He ran up to his friend and hugged him tightly. “They’re a bunch of idiots if they didn’t put you on the team. You flew better than half the players! I will absolutely hex someone if—” Obi-Wan was laughing.

“I’m on the team! I’m a Chaser for Hufflepuff!”

“You bastard!” Anakin hugged him tighter. Obi-Wan laughed. It was an excellent dinner. Cody had also made the team and their group at the Inter-House table had to be asked to quiet down twice.

As September progressed a routine was established. Anakin spent Tuesday nights with Obi-Wan at Dueling Club, which Professor Windu ran, and Sundays studying with him either at the lake or library. Thursday nights were spent meditating with Qui-Gon. Though Ahsoka and Padmé had joined them for this now and while he loved them, it felt a bit crowded sometimes. They both had Quidditch Practice and classes, so three days a week of spending some time together would have to do.

The first Quidditch Match of the year was Slytherin against Ravenclaw, and Slytherin easily won the match in under two hours. Anakin played one of his best games yet, scoring over and over with the quaffle and dodging bludgers easily.

That night Anakin had a late night chat with Threepio. ‘Massster. There is a Great presssence here.’ He asked her what she meant and she’d told him that she’d been hunting mice deep in the dungeons when she felt it. The presence of a very powerful serpent. He asked for clarification. ‘Many of my kind usssed to be very powerful. They were worshipped by humansss. Humansss killed many of the mosst powerful, but some still exist, hidden, waiting to live in the sun once more.’ Anakin was unsettled by the words, but made a mental note to do research. Threepio had slithered off to the collection of warmth-charmed rocks she now had under Anakin’s bed.

However Anakin was busy and September moved into late October before he knew it. Anakin, Obi-Wan, Padmé, and Ahsoka were studying in the library on a Saturday afternoon. Not just any Saturday. It was Halloween and the Feast would be tonight. Well, Anakin was trying to study but he was more interested in charming drawings and bits of paper.

Suddenly the library doors opened and Headmaster Yoda, Professor Windu, and a man Anakin had never seen came through. He was tall, with a thick salt and pepper beard and a commanding presence. Anakin disliked him the same way he’d disliked Palpatine.

“That’s him!” Padmé whispered. “That’s Dooku!” Everyone at their table looked up, then immediately back down at their books, listening carefully.

“Not as impressive as the library at Durmstrang,” he was saying, “but not bad.” Mace looked like he’d very much like to curse the man.
“Yes, yes, we have been fortunate to acquire many texts over the centuries, some that are very rare.” Headmaster Yoda replied. “And four of our brightest students we have here.” They were approaching their table.

“Miss Amidala, pleasure to see you again,” Dooku said, lightly shaking her hand.

“Same to you, Chief Secretary Dooku.”

The Headmaster introduced the rest of them.

“Ah, young Mr. Skywalker. I’ve heard much about you and your...adventures last year.” Anakin bristled but tried not to show it. He smiled politely. The idea that being kidnapped and nearly mutilated being referred to as an 'adventure' was beyond insulting. Obi-Wan sent him comforting feelings through their bond. Thankfully Mace redirected conversation and the trio soon left the library.

“What a creep.” Ahsoka said.

“I told you,” said Padmé. “I don’t know why he’s here but I don’t like it.”

As Anakin left his dorm to head to the feast, he was nearly to the staircase when he realized he’d forgotten to re-charm the rocks under his bed for Threepio. He jogged back, cursing under his breath. Charming them and then heading out once again, he caught movement out of the corner of his eye. Someone was going down into the dungeons. He considered letting it go, but his instincts had never led him astray. Casting a quick charm to silence his footsteps, he quietly turned the same corner and caught sight of Dooku. The man was on a mission into the bowels of the dungeons it seemed. Anakin hadn’t been down here since last year, but he pushed his fear down and kept following around multiple corners and increasingly grotesque statues.

Finally Dooku stopped in front of an archway, large and with two serpents carved into it, twining around the arch and meeting in the middle. But there was no door under it, only more brick. He murmured several incantations but nothing happened. Dooku swore loudly and Anakin stepped back. He removed his outer cloak, knowing that if he had to hide the billowing fabric would do him no favors. The Feast would be starting soon so surely Dooku couldn’t stay down here much longer. A few more hurled curses at the wall and Anakin was about to leave. But suddenly a small opening appeared and Dooku went through it, the wall closing behind him. Anakin knew he couldn’t follow. He turned and ran back towards the Great Hall as fast as he could, remembering to secure his cloak around himself once again. As he took his seat at the Slytherin Table (the inter-house table not allowed for formal occasions), Tyzen asked him why he was out of breath. “Took a nap,” he lied easily.

The Headmaster gave the usual speech about observing roots as magical beings, taking time to reflect on what the ancient New Year meant and to be grateful for having plenty and being among friends. Anakin noticed that Dooku wasn’t at the Feast. As food appeared he ate but not with the usual enthusiasm of a feast. He barely touched his Shepherd’s pie which was his favorite.

“What’s wrong?” Came through their bond.

‘Tell you later in private. Ahsoka and Padmé, too.’ It would be tomorrow before he could talk to all four of them privately at the same time, but he’d have to wait.

In bed that night he tossed and turned, annoying Artoo until she jumped off the bed. Threepio
managed to slither up a bed post. ‘You feel it too, Massster?’

‘Feel what?’ He asked the little adder.

‘The Great presssence. It has been stirred by an outsider. It is not happy.’

‘Threepio, what exactly is this great presssence?’

‘Cannot say for sssure, Massster. Only that it is a powerful ssserpent.’

‘I think I know who dissturbed it. I have to ssstop him.’

‘I will help Massster ass much ass I can.’ Her tongue flicked his cheek gently and he took comfort from it. Sleep eluded him that night as he went through options of who to tell, and what to tell them.

“Okay, so why are we in a tiny old classroom with a Silencing Charm around us, Skyguy”?

Ahsoka looked amused more than anything but Obi-Wan and Padmé were both worried.

“Last night, before the feast, I ran back to my room for something. When I left the Common Room, I noticed someone going into the dungeons. Past where we’re allowed. So I followed them. Don’t worry, I wasn’t seen,” he assured Padmé who looked worried. “I cast the Hear Me Not Charm. Anyway, it was Dooku. He went really far into the dungeons. And he stopped in front of this huge archway. Except the archway was all bricked up. He kept casting spells at it but nothing was working. I was about to leave and give myself time to not be seen, but then he cast a spell and there was an opening in it. He went through and I left.”

“That’s weird and creepy, but what could it mean?” The Gryffindor girl queried.

“There’s more.” Anakin said this almost hesitantly. “Obi-Wan knows this but you two don’t. I have a pet snake. Well, not a pet, she’s a friend.” He held out his robed arm and pulled the fabric back, revealing the foot long adder curled around his forearm. Padmé immediately jumped back, knocking over a couple of old wooden chairs.

“Anakin! That’s an adder! They are deadly!” She aimed her wand at his arm but Anakin turned his body to shield Threepio.

He hissed to her that it was okay, the girl was scared but wouldn’t hurt her. He even lifted her to curl around his neck as she preferred. She hissed her gratitude back.

Ahsoka’s jaw hung open.

Padmé lowered her wand. “Anakin, you’re a Parselmouth?! Do you know how rare that is?”

“Qui-Gon told me. That’s why I didn’t tell anyone. And I’m asking you guys not to tell either.”

They all nodded.

“But here’s the important part. Threepio, that’s her name, told me that there’s a powerful presence in the school. A serpent of some kind though she doesn’t know for sure. But last night someone disturbed it intentionally. I think it was Dooku. I mean he went through an archway of stone snakes. It had to be him.”

“Are you saying there’s some kind of magically powerful snake in the castle and Dooku just...pissed
it off for kicks?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Basically, yes.”

“I haven’t read or heard of any legends about Hogwarts that involve snakes...but I’ll do some research.” Padmé said.

“Me too,” said the rest at the same time.

“What could his goal be?” Padmé wondered. “I suppose we’ll have to research first. Alright, I have to get back to my dorm, but if anyone learns anything, we need to tell each other immediately. Anakin and Obi-Wan can already reach each other instantaneously. But we need a way for all of us to communicate quickly. I’ll work on that as well. In the meantime, keep your eyes open and be safe.”

Ahsoka canceled her Silencing Charm and the group dispersed.

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The next day as Anakin and Ahsoka were coming out of Potions behind everyone else, they heard a shrill scream up ahead, around the corner that led to the moving staircase. Running to catch up, they saw that it was Riyo who had screamed. Petro was lying on the floor. But instead of just incapacitated he'd been completely turned to stone.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed it! As always, I love comments of all kinds. Positive, constructive criticism, it all keeps me going. Thanks for reading!
The news about Petro spread around the school like wildfire. At dinner the Headmaster had assured everyone that Petro wasn’t dead and that Healers from St. Mungo’s were being brought in to find a cure as soon as possible. Lux said that his parents and Petro’s mother were all coming that evening. Lux was badly shaken at having his cousin attacked by an unknown person, and everyone at the Slytherin table was doing their best to comfort him. Classes for the next day were cancelled and Anakin planned on researching all day. He needed to talk to the Headmaster but he was busy with Petro’s family. So after dinner he sought out Qui-Gon.

He politely asked the tapestry outside the door to the man’s personal rooms, a knight standing by a unicorn, if Qui-Gon was available. And soon he was being ushered inside.

“Anakin, what brings you here so close to curfew?” His professor and friend looked stressed, and Anakin wished he had better news.

“Something’s going on, in the castle I mean. I don’t think it was anyone from the school who attacked Petro.” He swallowed, not wanting to explain this next part but needing to. Qui-Gon was on his side, after all. “At the beginning of the year Threepio stowed away in my trunk. Before Halloween she told me that there was a great serpent in the castle, and that after Halloween someone had disturbed it, made it angry. Before the Feast on Halloween I saw Dooku going into the lower levels of the dungeons. He was trying to get into some kind of room down there, one under the big arch with the snakes on it. I think he’s behind what happened to Petro.” Anakin said it all in a great rush, but thankfully Qui-Gon had no problems understanding. He sat heavily on the small sofa in his living room.

“Tomorrow you and I will see the Headmaster about this. Until then, keep Threepio close. And stay close to your friends. You need to get to your dorm now, though. I’ll send you a message tomorrow. And thank you for telling me this, Anakin. I promise to do everything I can.” They both stood and Qui-Gon hugged the boy tightly before he left. He poured himself two fingers of scotch and was awake hours after he’d finished his drink.

At breakfast, Anakin, Ahsoka, Obi-Wan, and Padme were at the inter-House table, preparing to go to the library. Padme had given them all lists of topics that might be good places to start.

Walking to the library, Anakin told his friends he’d spoken to Qui-Gon and would likely be speaking to the Headmaster later on today.

“Good,” said Padme. “We’ll need all the help we can get. Though Dooku is high up. Without hard proof, it’s going to be hard to catch him.”

“Agreed,” said Obi-Wan.

“Threepio is doing surveillance. Hopefully we can find something.”

“Am I the only one freaked out by the possibility of a giant snake being somewhere in our schools?” Ahsoka whispered.

“Definitely not. But that’s why we’re researching. To try and find out what we might be up against.”
Obi-Wan assured her.

Setting their bags down at a library table they split up into different sections. Padme was looking into the school’s founding and architecture. Ahsoka was looking into petrification curses, and Obi-Wan was researching potions and poisons. Which left Anakin to read up on magical snakes and other reptiles. Hours passed quietly in the nearly empty library.

“Look!” Anakin nearly shouted, drawing a vicious look from the librarian. But his friends shuffled closer. In a much quieter voice Anakin read a passage he’d found about basilisks. “Basilisks, born from a toad hatching a chicken’s egg, are giant, venomous serpents that have been known to be up fifty feet long. While they kill prey with venom which runs through their fangs, looking into the eyes of a basilisk will turn a person to stone.”

“This has to be it.” said Obi-Wan. “Threepio said there was a great serpent here. If someone’s been turned to stone then it has to be a basilisk. But how would one even get into the school? It’s supposed to be the safest place for wizards and witches.”

“Anakin got kidnapped by a Dark Lord here. I’m not so sure about the safety of Hogwarts.” Ahsoka said darkly.

“I was also saved here.” Anakin said. Though it was a good point. “Anyway, I agree with Obi-Wan, a basilisk must be what Dooku unleashed.”

“Wait a second,” said Padme. “I was reading that Salazar Slytherin was rumored to have built a room in the dungeons. Something to house treasure but also to ‘protect young wizards and witches who were often persecuted by Muggles’. I mean every Founder is rumored to have added something of their own design to Hogwarts, but that room you described. Could that be it?”

“Maybe. We should go down and have a look, at least.”

“Don’t go into the dungeons alone,” Obi-Wan said. “Take at least one of us with you. There’s a reason Yoda said it was off-limits to students this year.”

Anakin nodded and was about to respond, but a House Elf appeared with a ‘pop’ in front of him, startling him. “Master Jinn is asking Winky to deliver this to Master Skywalker!” And with another ‘pop’ he was gone. Reading the note, it looked like it was time for him to talk to the Headmaster.

Telling his friends he’d meet up with them later, he headed off towards the Headmaster’s Office.

Sitting before the small and ancient wizard, Professor Windu standing behind him and Qui-Gon seated to his left, Anakin recounted what he’d told Qui-Gon.

“You have a rare ability, Mr. Skywalker. Parseltongue is hardly seen these days. I will take your concerns under advisement. However while Dooku may not be a politician who I agree with, accusing him of attacking children at the school is very serious. I would ask you to refrain from doing so unless undeniable proof is found.”

“Like we all waiting for ‘undeniable proof’ from Palpatine, sir?” Anakin knew he shouldn’t shoot off from the mouth like that but he’d taken an Unbreakable Vow to protect the school after almost being murdered by someone inside it who he was supposed to trust.

“Mr. Skywalker! You will not take that tone with the Headmaster!” Windu practically shouted at him.
“Sorry, sir,” Anakin mumbled halfheartedly.

“I know what this school means to you,” Yoda continued. “And I know the sacrifice you and your friends made by taking your Vows last year. But we cannot rush in with no proof. You must understand that.”

Anakin sighed. “I do.”

“Not to mention that the word of a snake is hardly reliable intel.” Windu added.

Anakin had a feeling he didn’t just mean Threepio. He was about to reply angrily but Qui-Gon’s hand on his shoulder stopped him. “I think young Mr. Skywalker and I will be going now. We thank you for your time, as I’m sure it’s under great demand during this crisis.” He stood, bowing slightly, and guided Anakin down the spiral staircase.

“I know you wanted action to come from that meeting, but the best you can do is continue to research and keep your eyes and ears open. I must go, but please keep me appraised of the situation, and I’ll see you in class.”

Anakin returned to the library to inform his friends of what had happened during the short meeting. Padme was unsurprised but both Ahsoka and Obi-Wan were upset that he’d been dismissed so easily. Before too long everyone’s vision was blurry from reading and a break was very much needed. They agreed to pick up again after dinner and Anakin headed to his dorm for a nap.

The second year boys’ dorm was empty. Lux was with his family, Petro was still being prodded by Healers most likely, and Tyzen was out by the lake with Barriss.

Drawing his curtains closed Anakin curled in on himself in the bed. His frustrated thoughts eventually gave way to sleep. When he heard words in his mind, he figured they were from a half formed dream. The whispered ‘It hurtsss. Pleassse help Ssssuna’ faded into the backdrop of sleep.

Two weeks had gone by and Padme had asked them to meet in a specific abandoned classroom, saying she’d figured out how they could all communicate with each other instantly. She presented four bracelets, all made of thread.

“Sooo you made us friendship bracelets?” Ahsoka asked with an eyebrow raised.

“Yes,” Padme said proudly. “But they’re Charmed. I can’t do anything for complicated messages, but these can send feelings and basic thoughts. Ideas like ‘I need help’, ‘we need to meet’, ‘all clear’, that kind of thing. Here, let’s tie them on and I’ll show you how they work.”

Anakin held his wrist out and Padme tied the colorful bracelet around his wrist. It was very thin, but there were diagonal and criss crossing lines of blue, yellow, green, and red.

“You made inter-House friendship bracelets,” Anakin smiled.

Padme blushed. “It seemed fitting since we’re all from different Houses. Plus if it’s something we all relate to they work better and are easier to Charm.”

Once everyone had a thin new bracelet secured on their wrist, Padme held hers up to demonstrate. “I’ll send a thought, and see if you all receive it.” She closed her eyes and ran her finger over the bracelet. Immediately Anakin’s bracelet felt warm on his wrist and he knew that Padme needed them to all meet.
“We need to meet! That’s what you sent, right?” Ahsoka was now very much on board the friendship bracelet train.

“Yes! Did everyone get it?” Nods all around.

“Padme, this is amazing Charms work. I know we haven’t covered anything nearly this complicated in class.” Obi-Wan said with admiration.

“It’s my favorite subject and I’ve read tons of books on it. It took me a few weeks and several prototypes to get them right, but it was worth it.” She grinned back.

A few days later Anakin was sitting in History of Magic with the Hufflepuffs, trying very hard to care about yet another Goblin War and not get caught flicking charmed bits of paper back and forth with Cody and Tyzen.

His wrist went warm. ‘Danger’ flashed into his mind along with a sense of ‘Padme’ and before he could try and excuse himself Professor Wind came practically rushing into the classroom. He whispered something to Professor Nu and left immediately. The Professor put down her lecture notes and addressed the class. “I need everyone to calmly exit the classroom and go to your dorms. Pick a partner from your House, whoever is sitting closest to you, and make sure that both of you get there. Up, now!” She said it calmly enough but the undercurrent of panic was clear. When Anakin reached the hall, walking side by side with Tyzen, there was a cluster of students in that could be heard just up ahead, in the opposite direction of the way to the dungeons. Looking at Tyzen, both boys nodded in silent agreement and turned towards the commotion. Fighting past the gathered students, Anakin reached a wall where the source of the chaos must be. Some students were wailing and crying. He caught sight of Padme, looking terrified and holding another Ravenclaw girl.

Pushing forward again, Anakin stopped in his tracks. On the wall was written in what looked like blood, “The Heir Has Risen. Only the Pure Are Safe”. Below the writing, Aayla Secura was petrified, stuck in a position of being crouched and holding her neck, blood underneath her stone form suggesting what exactly the message had been written in.

Professor Windu approached the scene and was yelling now. “Everyone, to your dorms immediately! Prefects and Heads of House, make sure all younger years are totally present and accounted for!” There was scattering and Anakin and Tyzen hurried to head back to the Slytherin Common Room.

Luminara had made sure all Slytherins were accounted for. Everyone was in the Common Room, some upset and some still trying to wrap their minds around it.

“The heir to what?” Lux was asking angrily.

“The heir to Slytherin, of course,” Cad Bane drawled. Anakin had never given the Seventh Year much mind but he was listening. “That’s why only half-bloods have been attacked. Everyone knows Salazar Slytherin didn’t want them in the school. The last of the Slytherin line must be at Hogwarts and finishing what Slytherin himself always believed in doing.” He said it calmly, almost taking glee in it. “Petro is a half-blood and that Gryffindor girl was full on mudblood.”

“Petro was just as Slytherin as anyone else here!” Lux looked ready to attack the older boy.

“Apparently the Heir disagrees.” Bane grinned.
“Enough!” Luminara shouted. “No one in this House will be spouting any blood purist racism in here. Anyone uses the M word and I’ll personally see that you lose one hundred House Points! We are all Slytherin. We stick together, especially when things are hard.”

Lux looked mollified and Anakin was glad Luminara was Head Girl.

Anakin was on the floor, sitting between Lux and Barriss, Tyzen on Barriss’ other side. A lot of their House were filtering to their rooms. Anakin was considering doing the same. The book he had on Salazar Slytherin definitely needed some attention soon.

“I didn’t know Petro wasn’t full Bonteri. Not that it matters, Lux. Nothing justifies this.” Barriss said.

“Yeah, his dad was a Muggle. He didn’t like for people to know, especially since he got into Slytherin. I want to hex anyone who says that he or other half-blooms deserve this.”

“Me too,” said Anakin and Barriss. Tyzen nodded in agreement.

Anakin thought suddenly of Ahsoka. Her father had also been a Muggle. He’d tell Threepio to keep an extra eye out for her.

“I-I don’t want to be alone right now,” Lux said. The boy was usually so confident that Anakin was a bit floored at how vulnerable he looked at the moment. “Can you guys stay and sit with me for a bit?” The book could wait a bit longer, Anakin thought, as the four of them curled up on one of the smaller sofas in silence.

That night he finally fished out his copy of the Salazar Slytherin biography. He was into the second chapter when Threepio crawled up the bed.

‘Greetingsss Massster,’ she hissed. ‘Have you heard the Great Ssserpent? She hasss been ssspeaking of her disstressss.’

‘I have not. Why isss sshe in disstresss?’

‘I know not. But ssshe is very sssad. Sshe is hurting.’

Anakin paused. Perhaps Dooku was somehow manipulating the basilisk.

He needed more information. Tomorrow was Saturday so he could read until late, then continue researching tomorrow.

‘I have a favor to asssk of you. My friend Ahsssoka, may be in danger. Pleassse look out for her if you can.’

‘Of coursssse, Massster.’

When Threepio left, Artoo curled up on his stomach while he read. They both stayed like that for hours.

The next morning the Headmaster made the announcement that in light of current events, Quidditch and Hogsmeade visits would be cancelled until further notice. There was some grumbling but most students were too unnerved to really complain.
Anakin and his friends too their usual seat in the library after breakfast. “We have to find that room,” Anakin was saying. “I don’t think the basilisk wants to be doing what it is. At least not according to Threepio.”

“Anakin, I’m not so sure I actually want to go after a giant deadly snake,” Padme cautioned. “Research is important, but that’s so we can inform someone older who actually knows what they’re doing. If Dooku is involved, he’s likely Dark. We shouldn’t go looking for fights with things that are much more powerful than us.”

Anakin sulked but Ahsoka chimed in. “Me especially. If this thing is going after half-bloods, I don’t want to do it’s job for it and present myself on a silver platter.”

“Sorry, Snips. I didn’t think about it like that. I would never put you in danger.” Anakin said.

“I know,” she smiled at him. “Besides, Qui-Gon at least believes us and we can trust him.”

Obi-Wan had been more quiet than usual and Anakin looked to see what had his attention. A Ravenclaw girl across the library was smiling at him and Obi-Wan had a ridiculous grin on his face.

“Earth to Obi-Wan,” Anakin waved his hand in front of his friend’s face, jerking him back into the conversation. Anakin wasn’t sure why but he very much didn’t like the Ravenclaw girl across the library. He scowled at her which prompted her to turn away.

“Sorry,” Obi-Wan said, a bit startled. “That’s Satine. We have Charms together.” Padme giggled and Anakin felt his mood darken. He went back to his book on Slytherin.

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Alone with his thoughts that night, Anakin wondered what about the Ravenclaw girl from the library had made him so mad. Perhaps it wasn’t her fault. Obi-Wan should have been paying attention. He figured it was normal that his friends would eventually become interested in dating. Padme was a fourth year and had several boys milling around who she was always turning down. Anakin supposed she was pretty, but he’d never found a girl pretty in a way that made him distracted. Half their class thought he and Ahsoka were dating but Ahsoka was like a sister to him.

He tried to think of if he’d ever had a crush the way so many students obsessed over. Couples at Hogwarts held hands in the halls, but he’d never wanted that with a girl. He remembered the times in First Year when Obi-Wan had held his hand briefly. The first time he’d taken him to the kitchens, hand in hand. It made him flush happily at the memory. He knew from Owen that some boys liked other boys, but was he one of them? He thought of Obi-Wan’s soft smiles, the couple times he’d caught himself studying Quinlan Vos’ jawline or thinking that Cody looked cute with his hair all messy. He felt his stomach drop. Would his friends care? Would Obi-Wan never want to be alone with him again? He’d grown up in public school after all. He knew how cruel people could be over something that shouldn’t matter. And it made sense. He just couldn’t think of wanting to kiss a girl like he sometimes thought of boys. He sighed, more miserable than ever. As though a giant snake wasn’t enough to deal with. He wanted for one aspect of his life to be normal. Artoo curled up to him he fell asleep with his arm over her.

Chapter End Notes
leave comments! I love them and love you for leaving them.
Anakin Skywalker and Being 12 Can Suck

It was mid-November at Hogwarts and Anakin wasn’t any closer to finding a way into Salazar’s Chamber. He didn’t know why but he was sure that it had to exist, and that Dooku had accessed it. Padmé had warned him that Hogwarts held a lot of secrets, but every time he meditated on the issues around the serpent and the petrified students, something whispered to him that he had to find the Chamber.

He was reading yet another book about Salazar Slytherin. Many books made reference to the Founder having a pet snake, and of him being a Parseltongue, but this book, a biography by a witch who’d gone missing in the 1800s, seduced by vampires as the rumors went, said that his constrictor was much more than a pet. She claimed to have found evidence that the serpent was in fact bound somehow to Slytherin himself. Bound very closely at that. She said that their lifespans were intertwined and if one of them were killed, the other would die as well. Apparently it wasn’t a horcrux (Anakin didn’t know what that was but the author said it was Dark). Anakin wondered if he’d forged their presences together like he had done with his and Obi-Wan’s except different somehow.

But Slytherin had been a Renaissance man. He was extremely gifted with magic and was known to do wandless magic frequently. (Anakin was growing uncomfortable with their similarities. He was glad that Qui-Gon had cautioned him to keep his own Parseltongue abilities a secret. If he hadn’t then half the school would probably think he was the Heir.) But Slytherin had been fascinated with magical artifacts and their creation. It had apparently been among his ambitions to create one himself, to leave a legacy of great power. Towards the end of his life he was concerned about the increasing persecution of magical people and beings, worried that one day the school itself wouldn’t be safe. So he’d created an amulet of some kind. One that would call upon “the aspect of his guardian” if used correctly. And he’d hidden it in the school where only “those truly of his House” would find it. That must be the basilisk and the Chamber! It had to be.

Anakin checked his clock. It was two in the morning but he couldn’t sleep now if he wanted to. He wandlessly summoned the notes he was keeping on the issue, scrawling his findings about the amulet to other notes about Slytherin, the construction of Hogwarts, and magical serpents in general. He took in the new information. An amulet...one that could summon and control a basilisk. But why would Dooku kill students? He was older and powerful. If he wanted someone dead he could surely do it himself. Perhaps he was a blood purist like Padmé had said to him a few days ago when they’d once again been discussing him. If one creature could get rid of all non-pure bloods in one go, he wouldn’t have to dirty his own hands.

Anakin scowled. He’d never been a model student before Hogwarts. Always too distracted by computers and mechanical projects. But he had gone over the second World War. He’d stayed up late watching documentaries about it with Owen, too. He knew that some people thought that other humans were less than, and what they were willing to do when they thought that way. If anyone was thinking in such terms, Anakin would stop them. He’d learn every spell he could to make sure that Ahsoka and Petro and everyone else stayed safe. Pushing his anger down for now, he continued reading.

Late night, Skyguy?” Ahsoka said over breakfast. Anakin had nearly fallen asleep in his oatmeal. The inter-House table was just the four of them plus Barriss and Sola. Apparently fear made people cling to their own. Anakin was disappointed. He’d hoped Luminara at least would have made an
effort. But it was the same in the hallways. People walking in twos and threes, conversations hushed. Everyone was on edge. Aayla had been attacked less than two weeks ago and there was no news from the Healers or anyone else. Like a lot of students Anakin went and sat with Petro, and sometimes Aayla if no one was there. Madame Che said they probably couldn’t hear anything but he spoke to them anyway, knowing he’d want that if he was petrified and stuck in the hospital wing.

“Yeah, learned some interesting stuff though,” he said casually. No one was looking at their table. Good. “Slytherin made an amulet to control his uh, pet. Need to find a description of it though.”

“I can work on that,” said Padmé. Anakin smiled. Ahsoka had been having a hard time with research in the past week, but Anakin didn’t blame her. She was scared she might be next. He’d tried to spend time with her just the two of them, flying around the Quidditch pitch after class and it had seemed to help both of them.

“What about you, Obi-Wan?” Anakin asked.

“Hm?” Obi-Wan looked out of it and Anakin repeated the question. “Oh, I um, I’ll try to, just may be the weekend before I do. Charms study group and all. Though maybe we should leave this to adults. I mean, we don’t know what we’re doing. We haven’t found anything yet.”

Anakin fought the urge to roll his eyes. His friend was increasingly distracted by thoughts of the Ravenclaw girl, Satine. Anakin was willing enough to admit he was jealous, but there wasn’t anything he could do about it. Though he was also hurt that his friend was willing to trust in the same system that had nearly gotten him kidnapped and murdered last year. And for some girl with a prissy attitude who didn’t even play Quidditch.

“Adults?” Barriss asked condescendingly. “You mean the adults who wouldn’t have known how to save Anakin even if they’d realized he’d been kidnapped?”

Obi-Wan opened his mouth to retort but Barriss kept going. “The adults who couldn’t work out the password on the painting to the secret room where your friend was nearly mutilated by a psychopath who fooled every adult in this school for over three years? I thought Hufflepuffs were supposed to be loyal.”

Anakin was going to hug Barriss. Then he was going to get her anything she wanted for Christmas. “Anakin, I think we should go before we’re late for Charms.” She stood quickly. “And I’ll meet you for research whenever you want.” Anakin stood and left with Barriss, smiling at hearing Ahsoka and Padmé berating Obi-Wan behind them.

When they turned the corner Anakin couldn’t help it and he really did hug Barriss. It meant everything to have someone stick up for him like that. She hugged him back, surprising him again. “I may not be in whatever club the four of you have,” Barriss said, “but I am your friend.”

Anakin pulled back. “You are absolutely in my club,” he told her. “Though I didn’t think mixing primaries was your thing. Otherwise I’d have had Padmé make a bracelet for you, too.”

Barriss laughed. “Oh no, don’t think I’d wear one of those horrid things. I do have taste.” Though she said it with a gently teasing tone.

After a few classes lunch was approaching. Sensing his unease, Barriss suggested they go to the Common Room since it would be easy and they could talk about research. Anakin was thankful and sent a message through his bracelet discreetly that he was fine.

On the Common Room couch, while having having pumpkin pasties for lunch and going through
the multiple texts Anakin supplied on Salazar Slytherin and Hogwarts construction, Barriss nodded appreciatively at his notes so far. She was paging through an old book he’d checked out but hadn’t read because, well, he couldn’t. It was from the 1600s and he could only make out a few words of Latin here and there. “Can I keep this to read through?” She’d asked.

“You can read Latin?”

“It’s practically a requirement in my family,” she said. “Spellcrafting, wandmaking, healing, Potions Mastery… a lot of prestigious professions require fluency in Latin.”

“That’s kind of amazing,” Anakin remarked.

“Not when you’re seven and you just want to go out and play with the other kids,” she said sadly.

“True. If it makes you feel better I had to help Owen with odd jobs a lot. We needed money so badly that we’d take about anything and figure out how to do it afterwards. So not much playing for me unless you count electrifying myself by trying to figure out how to fix kitchen appliances.” He grinned and was gratified to see her smile back.

Dinner at the inter-House table was a bit tense. No one really knew what to say and Anakin made for Dueling Club right after with Ahsoka and Barriss. Second Years had a different Dueling Club night, overseen by Master Gallia, to get them used to the basics. It wasn’t the same kind of stress relief as flying, but it did help.

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Anakin woke up early the next day, hoping to patch things up with Obi-Wan. But on his way to the Great Hall, he was interrupted by a flow of students exiting the room. Qui-Gon was directing them back to their dorms. His heart sunk. Oh no. Someone else had been petrified. Anakin darted in between students and ran up to Qui-Gon. “Who was it?” He asked quietly.

Qui-Gon sighed. “I don’t know yet. Now, get back to your dorm. I’m sure word will get around soon enough.” Anakin nodded, ignoring the urge to hug the man. He followed the flow of human traffic when he heard something. It was faint but there.

‘Mussst obey, but need to be free. Mussst obey’

He stopped and moved flush against the wall to avoid being trampled.

He could hear it better from here. ‘Mussst hunt.’ In the wall! There was a snake in the wall! That’s how it was getting around the school. He pulled up the hood on his robe that doubled as a pointed hat and veered off, following the voice. He ran through corridors and passageways on the second floor, following his sense of it. He tried to call out in Parseltongue.

‘I want to help!’ But there was no reply. He couldn’t hear the serpent anymore. Dammit, he’d been so close.

He walked back through the castle the way he’d come. He was lost in thought, letting his feet take him on autopilot. He decided to detour through a way that would get him to the dungeons faster. Taking a right turn he came face to face with Mace Windu. He was with the Headmaster and Professor Tahl, standing over the petrified body of a second year Hufflepuff girl, Kat Ooni. A first year Hufflepuff who looked like the girl’s sister was sobbing into Professor Tahl’s robes.

“Skywalker! Why aren’t you in your dorm?”
“Sorry professor! I um, was supposed to meet someone before breakfast. I’ll go now.”

“Nothing to tell us about this scene?” The man arched an eyebrow.

“Sorry, sir?”

“You’re the one who can talk to snakes. Just thought you might have some insight on this sense you’ve been so concerned about it.”

“Professor Windu, enough. Let Mr. Skywalker get to class.”

‘Great,’ Anakin thought on his way back. ‘Professor Windu can bully me and the Headmaster will let him. I took an Unbreakable Vow to protect this place!’ Honestly, the man was driving him up the wall this year. And as if he was so great. His Muggle school had had a better system for alarms. There were protocols for fires, shooters, everything. Some Master of Defense Windu was...How was expecting random teachers on hand to just corrall hundreds of students all over the castle in the event of an emergency a good system? God, he was spending a lot of time with Padmé lately.

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By midday they were allowed out of their dorms and classes were once again cancelled for the day. Padmé was upset at the amounts of class time she was losing. Ahsoka had given her a mock-dirty look for that. Obi-Wan had told Padmé that he’d be busy with his housemates as a lot of them were shaken up about Kat. So the three of them were in the library, once again, missing dinner. Anakin swore he’d never visit this place again once they were done.

Their wrists all warmed at once. ‘Location?’ was Obi-Wan’s message. Less than fifteen minutes later and he was there, panting.

“What’s wrong?” Anakin asked, rising from his seat. Obi-Wan was never like this. Once he caught his breath he looked at Anakin sadly.

“Kat’s sister, Kara,” he said. “She saw you today, where Kat was?”

Anakin nodded. “And?”

“She’s been telling everyone that Windu said you can talk to snakes. I swear, I didn’t know she was telling people that and when I did I tried to stop them, but everyone’s talking about it now. People think that...that you’re the Heir. That you’re behind what’s happening. Not everyone, but a lot of people.”

Anakin’s heart sank. God. A Slytherin who could talk to snakes? He was going to be suspected.

“It’s—it’s okay. It’s not like I care about being popular. You guys know I would never do something like that and that’s enough. I was the poor kid at school before I knew I could do magic. I can handle it.” Hopefully. He’d learned to stand up against bullies the hard way as a Muggle, he could do it as a Wizard, too.

“I really am sorry,” Obi-Wan said again. “About everything. I should never have put off research for any reason. We’re in this together and I didn’t live up to that. Friends?”

Anakin couldn’t help it. He hugged his friend. “Friends.”

“I do have to get back to my Common Room. We’re having a House meeting. But whenever you need me tomorrow, I’m there.” They all nodded and Obi-Wan headed off again.
When he was gone Ahsoka snorted. “I’m sure Satine needs comforting.” Anakin wondered when his heart would stop clenching around that particular association.

“Be nice, he did apologize. Plus it’s not like you won’t have a crush someday.” Padmé chided.

“If I ever get that stupid expression on my face, please hex me.”

“Done.” Padmé said too cheerily.

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Anakin was wrong. He couldn’t handle this. He was just glad that it was nearing the end of term. A good three quarters of the school avoided him like the plague. People were constantly whispering that he was the murderer, that he should be kicked out. How could he not be if he could talk to snakes? Professor Windu had said so and he wouldn’t lie.

Professor Windu seemed a bit ashamed but it was of little comfort. Most of the students who weren’t avoiding him, well, he wished they would. Cad Bane was certain that Anakin was the Heir, or at the very least worth special attention since he was a Parseltongue. He’d conjured a snake in the Common Room near a group of first years just to see what Anakin would do. When he’d told it to leave them alone they’d looked terrified. Cad looked like he’d never been happier.

The older boy kept offering to teach him dark spells, introduce him to influential people. It was unnerving.

Walking around the freezing cold grounds in the snow, he was trying to get a moment’s peace to himself. It was nearly curfew and he desperately needed some solitude and quiet.

Which of course was when he spotted Obi-Wan and Satine up ahead. They were standing in a patch of light coming down from one of the high up windows. They were kissing. Awkwardly, but that didn’t make it hurt less. Anakin immediately turned tail. He wasn’t one to feel sorry for himself but he couldn’t help it at the moment. He found an alcove that kept him out of the wind, far from where he’d seen the couple. He sat awkwardly, all the anger and sadness at being called a murderer and a freak, at not even being able to be normal in this aspect of his life. He couldn’t like girls like a normal person. He couldn’t even like boys like a normal person. He liked his best friend and that was clearly not going to end well for him. He missed his home in London for the first time. It was small and cramped and they got bugs every summer but Owen always tried to make it feel like home. Even if all they could afford was to split some warm soda and watch a crap movie with a million commercials, he did what he could. He thought Hogwarts was his home but maybe he wasn’t safe or meant to be here either.

Anakin lost track of how long he spent crying. It was dark by the time he did. Very dark. He’d certainly missed curfew. All of his appendages were numb and he could barely stand. Reaching the front of the castle he ascended the first few stairs, then Qui-Gon nearly ran him over.


“You’re freezing.” He kneeled again, hugging Anakin tightly. If Anakin’s arms weren’t frozen and being pinned to his sides, he would’ve hugged back. Pulling back Qui-Gon got a good look at his puffy red-rimmed eyes.

“Oh, Anakin. Come, let’s get Madame Che to warm you up.”

As he stood again he pulled his wand up, saying “Expecto Patronum!” a silvery canine of some kind
erupted from his wand. “Tell Windu and the Headmaster the boy’s been found.” It nodded and took off. Anakin was too tired and cold to demand to know what his professor had just done.

Madame Che took one look at him and cast a series of diagnostic and then warming spells. Then she pushed a canteen of a potion he hadn’t even seen her holding into his hands with the directions to drink all of it. He did so, finding it not unpleasant. She said it would get his blood circulating a bit faster and help him feel better. She also said she’d write his morning teachers excuses as he wanted him to get plenty of sleep. He agreed quietly and then Qui-Gon was escorting him back out.

“Is there anything you want to talk about?” The man asked gently. Anakin nodded and Qui-Gon led them to his rooms, settling the boy on the couch with a warm cup of tea. He felt his bracelet warm and got the sense of panic. Oh god, he’d been too busy trying to get hypothermia to feel it before. ‘Safe’ he sent through it and relieved three separate messages of relief.

Qui-Gon was waiting patiently in his chair by the fire.

“I- how do you know if you’re different?”

“Different how?” Qui-Gon asked.

“I-” Well, if he couldn’t talk about this with Qui-Gon than he was really out of options. “I think I like boys,” he said flushing. “I mean, I know I like boys, but is it bad?”

“Oh, Anakin. It’s not bad at all. A lot of Wizards like other Wizards. Same for Witches. And some people find both genders attractive. It’s very normal, I assure you.”

“Yeah, but at my old school kids who were different like that got picked on and beat up. Is like that for Wizards and Witches too?” Qui-Gon put his cup down. “I’m not going to lie to you. Some Wizards and Witches don’t look kindly upon people of the same gender being together. But most of us, including all the teachers here, are very accepting. And there are same-gender couples here. There are less students here than at Muggle schools, but I promise that you are not alone in this among the student body.”

“So I won’t feel isolated like this forever?”

“You have your friends. And they care for you very much. And I’m sure that when you’re a bit older you’ll find another young man who appreciates you the way you want him to. And I know that your current situation is particularly trying. But take heart. You have Ahsoka, Padmé, and Obi-Wan. And one or two others, I’d wager. Friendship like that is not an easy thing to find.”

Anakin nodded, feeling better for the first time since, well, he didn’t want to think about that.

“Come, I’ll walk you to your dorm.”

Moving through the castle they ran into Professor Windu, who almost stopped them before he noticed Anakin had been crying and then nodded at them, moving along.

The only person who was still up in the Common Room was Barriss, who took one look and hugged him tightly before pushing him towards his dorm.

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Through the following days Anakin was quiet around his friends, suggesting that maybe they should take a break on research. He told them he couldn’t focus with everything going on and they shouldn’t make themselves targets by always pouring over books with him. They’d objected but he
insisted, saying he needed some time to himself to think about things. He did, but he also really needed time away from Obi-Wan. He continued to research with Barriss in privacy of a particular abandoned classroom she was fond of using when she wanted to be alone.

She’d finished the book that was written in Latin and had found a description of what she said had to be the amulet in it. The pendant was of a black ourobouros with white markings. Salazar had called it the Angfinium. It could control the serpent, but if worn, would supposedly give the wearer immortality. Unless they ever took the amulet off or it was taken from them, and they would die.

He told her almost excitedly of Palpatine’s plans to use his body as a way to escape death, and then all about Dooku. “Dooku is definitely Dark. He’s in my parents’ inner circle. You think he’s wearing the Angfinium?”

“Oh he’s using it to control the basilisk but saving it to give to the Dark Lord,” Anakin muttered.

“Shit,” Barriss said.

“Agreed.”

He also stayed up late with Barriss just talking sometimes. He was glad that she was in his year. She was sarcastic but he loved that about her. He caught whispering from across the room as they were working on homework together with Lux and Tyzen.

“You know half the school thinks that you two are an item now. That you’re like, the Dark Prince and Princess and are going to take over the school and turn it into a pure-blood only place.”

“My parents will be happy to hear about that,” Barriss said, hardly stopping in her essay. Anakin laughed. Tyzen offered them all more Chocolate Frogs. Anakin was glad he was a Slytherin, even if it meant dealing with creeps like Bane.

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It was only a few days before end of term. Ahsoka and Padmé were leaving, and he and Obi-Wan were the only students staying. He really wasn’t looking forward to that. But with the attacks everyone wanted their kids home for Christmas. Obi-Wan was staying in Qui-Gon’s extra room and asked if Anakin wanted to split it, but Anakin said he’d rather stay in his dorm, which Obi-Wan hadn’t taken too well.

Anakin was in mid-morning History of Magic yet again, trying very hard not to fall asleep. Suddenly he had a feeling of dread. He tried to think why but couldn’t. It wasn’t his bracelet. His heart was racing though and he knew he had to leave NOW.

Then Mace Windu barged in and it was like déjà vu. He immediately whispered something to the older Professor and then everyone was being herded to their dorms like panicky cattle. Anakin wasn’t though. He followed Professor Windu. When he got to the hallway he fell to his knees. Ahsoka was petrified. He stared for a long time before Windu noticed him. He walked towards him, tried to get him up off his knees. “No!” Anakin screamed. “No!” Windu hauled him off, into an empty classroom. Anakin was only dimly aware that he was crying. A chandelier above them fell, which Mace easily deflected. Several other items, desks and chairs, were slammed into walls with the force of Anakin’s grief and rage.

Mace had set him on a desk, but was stooped to look at his face. Anakin was in shock. He couldn’t process this. The first friend he’d ever had was…

Mace did surprise him then. He hugged him tightly, for a long time, until Anakin was capable of
being walked to the the Healer’s.
The day after finding Ahsoka, Anakin was feeling a bit more himself. He’d been given a calming potion and then a sleep potion by Madame Che and had spent the night in the hospital wing. When he’d woken up, Padmé and Obi-Wan were in his room.

After he’d cleared the sleep out of his eyes he’d sat up and asked if either of them had been to see Ahsoka yet. Padmé shook her head sadly and said that Ahsoka’s mother was in the room at the moment. The hospital wing sleep shirt and fleece pants were a bit big on him but he was past caring. “I should have researched more, worked faster,” he said numbly. “I should have saved her.”

Padmé rushed to hug him, Obi-Wan right behind her. “Oh Ani, you couldn’t have known, none of us could.”

“But we could! We knew she was a target because her dad was a Muggle!” He felt panicky and he couldn’t breathe properly.

“She’s going to be ok, Anakin! There’s already word of a cure!” Padmé insisted.

“Really?”

“Yes. Professor Billaba, Jinn, and Tahl have been working on it. Professor Billaba says they just need enough mandrakes to grow in and then they can start on it. Basilisks are so rare that no one’s needed a cure for their gaze in a long time, but Professor Jinn was talking to us about it.” She rubbed his back. “It going to be ok.”

Anakin took a deep breath. And Padmé backed away a bit. He nodded. “Ahsoka was brave. She kept looking even though she knew it might make her a target. We’ll be brave for her until she’s back.”

“We will,” Obi-Wan added. Things between the two of them were still a bit strained but Anakin was glad he was there.

The curtain to Anakin’s room opened and Ashla Tano was there. The woman had obviously been crying. Anakin felt guilt flood him again at seeing her face, but she too hugged him.

“Professor Windu told me how distraught you were. I’m glad she has friends like you three.” She hugged Padmé and Obi-Wan as well. “I know they’ll have a cure soon. I just hope it’s before anyone else gets hurt. I have to get going but you all be safe.”

When Ms. Tano’s footsteps had faded and Padmé and Obi-Wan had eventually left, Anakin had a plan. Kind of. He had to find the basilisk and the Chamber as soon as possible. Ms. Tano was right that there would be more attacks. And they might not be petrification. They might be worse.

Hogwarts had never felt so empty. The Christmas decorations were up, but knowing he and Obi-Wan were the only students at school was a bit eerie. But it did make it the perfect time to try and find the basilisk. Barriss had told him to be careful and he would, but he was also the only one who could talk to snakes and he had to find the Chamber.
Sitting on his bunk, he asked Threepio about it. He wasn’t sure why he hadn’t thought to ask her before. She felt awful about not protecting Ahsoka but he told her it wasn’t her fault. But the Basilisk had to be getting around the school somehow. Secret tunnels, pipes, there had to be something. He told Threepio he appreciated her no matter what, but that if she could find out where a huge snake might be or how it was getting around, he’d appreciate it. And if she heard the basilisk, let him know immediately.

She agreed and had set off on her mission. Anakin left to go retrace steps he’d made when he’d been so close to the basilisk’s voice weeks ago. The castle had been empty for two days so he startled when someone rounded the corner he was coming up to, his hand on the bricks and thoughts on what the guts of a magical castle might look like.

Obi-Wan nearly collided with him. “There you are. I haven’t seen you since break started. Why have you been hiding?”

“Not hiding,” Anakin said. It was partially true at least. “Looking for the Chamber. Or the basilisk.”

“Are you mad?!” Obi-Wan had never been angry at him before. “Ahsoka is paralyzed and you go looking for murderous serpent on your own? You said you were done with research!”

“I...I learned something. And I have to do this. There’s no one else to get hurt with everyone home on break. I can talk to snakes and I don’t think this snake wants to be hurting students! It said it was suffering and it asked for help. I think it’s been petrifying people because it doesn’t want to kill them. Plus I heard it and so did Threepio. What if I can help it and stop the attacks? If there’s any chance I can than I have to try!”

Obi-Wan pinched the bridge of his nose and looked down with closed eyes. “Alright, say it is being controlled. It would still hurt you! And what good would a petrified Parseltongue be?”

Anakin balled his fists up. “I might be able to talk to it, find out who has the amulet and stop them!”

“Or you get hurt, and I have to visit two friends in the hospital wing instead of one!”

“I’m a pureblood. It won’t kill me.”

Obi-Wan looked like he wanted to bang his head against the brick wall.

“If it looks at you, it would still petrify you. Look, I figured you wanted some time away from everybody with the Parseltongue rumors. And I know you like Barriss, but you’ve been avoiding me for weeks. I thought we were friends?”

Anakin deflated. “We are friends. The three of you are my best friends. But I don’t want you getting hurt just because I go after a giant snake.”

“Is it just that? The shields in your head have been up for a long time, Anakin. We used to check in with each other all the time. We hardly do that now.”

Anakin reddened and mumbled something.

“What?”

“I said it’s too much. It was an accident that the bond formed at all. It just...it feels like too much, sometimes, to have my emotions just out there for someone else to read. Plus you have emotions...about people...that I really don’t need to feel. It feels like reading someone else’s journal, you know?”
Obi-Wan blushed this time. “Oh, I didn’t think about...with Satine. And I’m sure you don’t want me to know how you feel about Barriss.”

“What? Barriss and I are just friends.”

“But people are saying...well, I guess people say a lot of things that are rubbish.” Obi-Wan finished, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Way too often.” Anakin agreed.

“So...you think the basilisk is moving through the castle walls somehow?”

“I has to be to reach victims in different parts of the castle.”

“Four victims. Two close to each other, the others spread out more...is there something those places have in common?” Obi-Wan wandered.

Anakin tried to mentally picture the sites. Aayla and Ahsoka had been found in spots close to each other. “What would two students be doing at those places in the halls while classes were going on?”

“Bathrooms!” They said at the same time, grinning widely.

“It must be using the pipes! But how would a giant snake get in and out of a bathroom?” Obi-Wan asked.

“No idea. But we should investigate all the bathrooms, starting with one near the History of Magic classroom!”

Obi-Wan nodded and the took off for the second floor. Standing in front of the girl’s bathroom, Anakin felt more awkward about going into a girls’ washroom than about finding a basilisk.

“Thank god there are no other students here,” he murmured, and Obi-Wan silently agreed, following after him.

The bathroom seemed fairly ordinary. Four stalls, three sinks, one of them leaking. Obi-Wan’s ‘Revelio’ didn’t reveal anything. Anakin was studying the sinks. There had to be something here. On one of the faucets he noticed something odd. There were tiny squiggles carved into them. At first they looked like aberrations in the stone but looking closer he saw that they were serpents with forked tongues.

“Look at this!” he called excitedly. Obi-Wan leaned in to see.

“Snakes! So you think the basilisk is getting in and out of here somehow?”

“Maybe...but I’ve no idea how.”

Several lock-breaking spells later and they were out of luck.

“This is important somehow, I know it,” Anakin said with frustration evident in his voice.

“Well, looks like we have more to research at least. We should get started with spells and wards to guard entrances.” Obi-Wan suggested.

Anakin nodded and they headed for the library. It was good to have Obi-Wan back as a friend. Maybe he’d eventually learn to not be angry with the girls he dated. Maybe.
Winter break wore on with not much more progress and soon it was Christmas. Anakin woke in his dorm to several packages on his bed. He had a book on basic mechanical repairs from Owen with a note from him saying that he knew Anakin knew more than an intro book, but hoped it could help with his project. Anakin smiled, thinking ruefully of the project he hadn’t even had time to start this year.

There was a homemade sweater from Ahsoka’s mother that nearly made him cry. It was dark green and fit him perfectly, with grey accents at the cuffs. He sent her a photo that someone with a magical camera taken of him and Ahsoka under at their spot by the lake first year.

Padmé had got him the third year textbook on Transfigurations saying that Professor Jinn had told her he had a gift and she wanted to encourage him to use it. Barriss sent him a beautiful leather-bound book on magical serpents. The cover even had bronze snakes the moved around the title. She also sent him a smaller paperback book called “Latin for Beginners and Intermediates: A Comprehensive Guide to Vocabulary, Grammar, and Syntax”. It looked to have many notes in it in Barriss’ own hand. He smiled, happy he’d gotten her a ridiculous stuffed snake that came attached to a plush heart. He couldn’t wait to hear what people would say over that one and had a feeling Barriss would appreciate the reactions as well. Owen had been confused at the request but it had so been worth it.

He got another text on Transfigurations from Qui-Gon, and a broom polishing kit from Obi-Wan. He’d gotten Obi-Wan a book by a famous Quidditch Keeper. It had stung a bit to hear Obi-Wan go on about what he’d gotten for Satine but it hurt less lately. Maybe time would fix it. Or maybe missing Ahsoka hurt so much more that it just mattered less.

He, Obi-Wan, and Qui-Gon spent time talking to Ahsoka before Christmas dinner. During dinner Anakin sat between Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan and across from Windu. Though surprisingly Windu discreetly slipped him a small photo of his mother and father along with a note. His father had died before he was born, but seeing them both together, happy and smiling, meant more to him than he could say. He tucked the photo into his robes and planned to spend a lot of time looking at it later that night. He was mostly quiet during dinner, and afterwards Obi-Wan practically begged him to come back to Qui-Gon’s rooms with them. He agreed after his friend said that no one should spend Christmas alone.

They stayed up very late, playing Exploding Snap and drinking tea. Qui-Gon went to bed leaving Obi-Wan and Anakin in front of the small lit tree in his living room. They’d been quiet for some time, Obi-Wan with his book and Anakin looking at the photo of his parents, having already read the note. Obi-Wan leaned over to see what he was looking at.

“Are those your parents?”

“Yeah. Dad died before I was born. He worked for the Department of Mysteries, apparently. Mum was an Auror. It’s weird but I never thought to ask what they did when I learned I was a Wizard. Apparently mum’s job was protecting other people from Dark Wizards.”

“She’d be really proud of you. They both would.”

Anakin stared at the photo of a beaming dark haired woman standing in the arms of a much taller man who had light hair and blue eyes.

“Thank you.”
He slept peacefully on Qui-Gon’s couch that night.

Before long students were back at Hogwarts. Well, most of them. Several had families that had pulled them out until the attacks were stopped.

Professor Tahl pulled Anakin aside after Potions class one morning. “I know you don’t know me very well, and your last Potions Master abused your trust horrifically. But I do know what it is to worry for a friend, and we’re very near having a completed cure. You’ll be among the first to know when we do, I promise.”

“Thank you,” Anakin said genuinely. He considered asking if they were any closer to finding the basilisk, but figured he had Qui-Gon for that and didn’t want to offend someone who was well-meaning.

January marched on and even Padmé had no idea what to do about the snakes in the girls’ bathroom or even any new information. She’d been preoccupied with her sister though. Sola was starting to act a bit strangely at times. She figured it was stress from the attacks but it worried her to see her sister zoning out for long minutes at a time.

In mid January two students were attacked in the same week. A fifth year Gryffindor and seventh year Ravenclaw. Anakin wasn’t familiar with either but he became increasingly frustrated with his lack of progress.

Having Barriss back was good at least. She had hugged him fiercely when she’d first seen him, cackling that her parents were over the moon that the “the Heir” was interested in their daughter. He had cracked up as well as she did imitations of her very posh-sounding parents in their abandoned classroom. And then she made a show of carrying the stuffed snake curled around the red heart around the Common Room. He made a mental note to get her something even gaudier for Valentine’s Day.

“It’s almost a shame,” she’d one day, looking up from correcting the Latin assignment she’d given him.

“What is?”

“That we don’t actually like each other that way.”

“Yeah,” he’d said, heart suddenly heavy. “I suppose it is.”

“I mean, you like Ahsoka, right?”

“No,” he’d laughed. “She was my first friend. She’s like a sister. Like you and Padmé.”

“So then who do you like? Oh come on, it can’t be that bad,” she’d countered in reaction to his blush.

“It’s um...someone I really shouldn’t. I mean, I don’t even know how Wizarding families feel about that kind of thing and...it would be easier if I didn’t.”

Barriss had a very serious look on her face. “Anakin, are you saying you’re gay?”

Not wanting to lie to one of his only real friends, he’d said yes. She’d told him her parents couldn’t stand purebloods who “refused their duty to continue their lines” but added that she thought her
parents were largely idiots. She also said that he’d be her friend no matter who he had a crush on or dated. And lastly that she’d known since she was nine that she liked girls, so he wasn’t alone. And finally that he couldn’t hug her like that with no warning.

He smiled thinking back on that day which only a few days ago. People still whispered about him in the halls but ever since news of his freak out over finding Ahsoka had spread, less people whispered. Cody sat by him in History of Magic again, but Anakin was hesitant to forgive people who had easily assumed he was some kind of aspiring Dark Lord trying to murder students.

He was pacing the dungeons again, hoping to catch the sound of the basilisk. Threepio hadn’t found anything yet and the feeling that he had to stop this was growing. He checked his watch, noting it was nearly curfew. Sighing in frustrations he decided he’d have to try again tomorrow.

In a quiet haze of classes, learning Latin, not avoiding Obi-Wan but still sometimes avoiding him, Obi-Wan, and researching, time had passed quickly. It was nearly Valentine’s Day and god, Anakin hated this holiday more than any other time of year. Not just because of the obnoxious amount of paper hearts and giggling, but because of what had happened to him this time last year. A psychopath had abducted and nearly murdered him. The more decorations of ugly cherubs pairs of hearts he saw, the more nightmares he had about being tied up and helpless, watching an old man cut his own eye out in front of a terrifying altar before turning to him.

He now always put silencing charms up around his bed but he double checked them this time of year. Thankfully Artoo was always there to nuzzle him and purr into his neck after a particularly bad nightmare. Threepio tried to help too, offering to bring him mice.

Sitting down to work in the library, Obi-Wan commented that he looked awful. Padmé kicked him under the table. “I hate Valentine’s Day,” he said grumpily.

“I’m sorry, Ani. It must be awful to think about what happened this time last year. If you need anything, let me know. I can brew a really good Dreamless Sleep potion if you need it.”

“That would be fantastic, actually.” He said gratefully.

“I can’t do that, but Qui-Gon has been teaching me to do guided meditation. I can help you with it if you want.” Obi-Wan suggested.

“I think my mind’s too tired for meditation, but thanks,” Anakin smiled. He honestly just wasn’t ready to re-open his bond with Obi-Wan. Maybe in the future, but not now.

“I’m off then,” he smiled back. “I’ve got to get Satine’s gift ready.” Anakin tried to force a smile. He was afraid it looked more like a grimace, but he did try.

“Spill.” Padmé said once their Hufflepuff friend was gone.

“Spill what?”

Padmé gave him her best unimpressed face. “You spend a ton of time with Barriss, half the school thinks you’re together, but half the time Obi-Wan is around you look like a kicked puppy. I was going to ignore it but you don’t seem like you’re doing so well.”

She was right. His grades were slipping. When he wasn’t wishing Obi-Wan could just like him back, he was chasing a giant deadly snake through the school. He glanced around, making sure no one was listening, then leaned in close.
“Barriss and I aren’t really together,” he said. “It’s just...beneficial for both of us for people to think we are. I’m gay. And I’m an idiot. I’m a gay idiot with a crush on his straight best friend. And when I’m not upset over all of that, I’m missing Ahsoka or trying to find a giant, possibly murderous snake. I have nightmares about Palpatine almost every night, and I feel like if someone bumped into me in the hall too hard I’d just shatter.” It felt good to get it out.

He loved Padmé’s sympathetic face. It meant hugs and chocolate frogs. She held onto his hands. “Do you want to talk somewhere more private?”

“No, I just...I want Ahsoka back and for everyone else to be okay.” A thought occurred. “You know in my old muggle school I had to see a counselor once because I kept getting into fights. It’s really strange that Wizards don’t seem to have counselors or psychiatrists.”

“We could learn a lot from Muggles,” Padmé said. “I can get you the potion in a couple days. Just...take care of yourself. We need you.”

“I will,” he promised.

The dreaded V Day came. Anakin got Barriss a giant heart shaped box of expensive chocolates and a gaudy, heart shaped pendant that was very cheap. When he’d asked Qui-Gon to acquire these for him he’d been a bit confused. “We have a mutually beneficial arrangement for the time being,” he’d explained. “It amuses both of us.”

She’d gotten him an expensive looking watch. But instead of numbers it had her name and the name of some of his friends who her parents thought were “acceptable”. Lux, Tyzen, and Petro were on it, as well as Sola. Barriss had said that Sola was her best friend so she’d wanted her included. Different hands read “danger”, “studying”, “sleeping”, etc. They made a show of embracing tightly in the crowded Common Room, Barriss promising to never take the necklace off. They did an admirable job with not cracking up in front of their audience.

Obi-Wan had received a truly hideous ring with three goal posts in it. Anakin thought it looked like the kind of thing crime lords in movies would wear. Even Obi-Wan seemed embarrassed by it, but he wore it. He’d gotten Satine a pink puffskein and Anakin grinned when Padmé had told him in private that the Ravenclaw was “disappointed” with it. Padmé herself had received multiple gifts, mostly from upper classmen looking to court a young and attractive girl from an influential House. She’d sent them all to be auctioned for charity, except the chocolates which the four of them ate and a small, hand carved wooden eagle. Anakin was admiring the craftsmanship. Even the under feathers were done with care. Padmé had blushed when asked about, saying it was from her friend Palo, a fellow fourth year Ravenclaw who was a gifted artist.

Anakin himself had received a few gifts from “admirers” who were sure he was a Dark Lord. Barriss destroyed them in a jealous fit, loudly swearing to hex anyone who thought they could tear them apart into oblivion. Anakin almost wished he did like girls. His favorite gift however was the sleeping draught from Padmé.

He had taken a small sip as instructed while he was in the Common Room, expecting to go straight to bed. But then Barriss had cornered him. She was worried about her friend Sola, citing the same concerns that Padmé had. He promised to take it up with the older Amidala sister tomorrow and that he’d watch out for her as best he could. Then he stumbled up to bed and crashed almost immediately. It was wonderful.
Padmé was concerned about Sola. Apparently her fits were lasting longer. She'd become unmovable and while not petrified, impossible to get a response from. Right after one such fit another student was petrified. Krell, the Seventh Year Gryffindor.

Padmé had gotten a strange look on her face not long after and suggested she contact her parents and see if anything strange had gone on between Dooku and Sola during his visit to her family over Christmas.

When Padmé was done with her fire call, she called a meeting in an abandoned classroom.

Anakin had never seen the collected Ravenclaw girl so distraught. “I talked to my parents about the visit. They still think I’m crazy for asking, but Mom said that Dooku gave Sola a necklace. I didn’t think about it, but she’s been wearing it all year. I thought it was just something our parents got her. But curses like that, ones for control...they take time to show symptoms.”

“How can we just remove the necklace?” Obi-Wan asked.

“I don’t know. It could hurt her. Some are designed to kill but I doubt that, since he seems to need her for something.”

“To help the basilisk. He using someone inside the school to help the basilisk hunt. Dooku has the amulet and control of Sola.” Anakin said darkly.

Padmé looked like she was trying very hard not to cry.

“We need to take Sola to Windu, privately. If anyone can help us understand her necklace, it’s him.”

“He has office hours now,’ Padmé said with authority. “Let’s go.”

Padmé went to collect Sola, and Anakin and Obi-Wan went to the Professor’s Office. They knocked and thankfully he answered. “And what can I do for you two gentleman?” He asked in a neutral tone.

“Not for us,” Obi-Wan said. “For a friend. Just wait.” Minutes later Padmé was dragging Sola into the office.

“We think she’s been wearing a cursed necklace,” Padmé said urgently. “Please, can you look at it and see?”

Windu narrowed his eyes, but pulled his office door shut and crouched in front of Sola. He gently pulled her necklace above her robes and it tapped it lightly with his wand, then shuddered.

“There’s Darkness in this thing, that’s for sure. Do you know how she got it?”

“Dooku gave it to her last summer.” Padmé supplied.

Sola seemed to break out of her trance. “It’s the Master’s. I must do as he commands.”

“And who’s the Master?” Windu asked calmly.

“I do not speak his name. But I must carry out his work. I will only speak about the work with the Master.”

Mace sighed. “This won’t be easy, but I think I can get this off. Somnium!” Sola fell limp.
“Once we remove this, Dooku will know.” Windu said.

“But he won’t have his inside contact anymore. If he wants the basilisk to keep attacking he’d have to show his face here.” Anakin countered.

“You are absolutely Slytherin,” Windu commented. “And I say that as a compliment.”

Anakin gave a half smile. “If he shows his face, he’ll bring the amulet. Plus we can’t afford to let whatever curse this is keep hurting Sola.”

Padmé nodded emphatically.

“Alright, Skywalker and Kenobi, you two stand back. Ms. Amidala, I need you to put your hand on your sister’s shoulder, like that, yes. It will be easier if she can feel a presence she trusts.”

Mace began chanting in a language Anakin didn’t know. Something both guttural and melodious. Sola twitched, began convulsing. “Tell your sister about your best memories together. Focus on them as hard as you can.” Padmé spoke of summers at the lake, escaping boring galas together, teaching her sister to fly a broomstick. Of their late night conversations about boys and clothes and all the unimportant, boring things that made those times so perfect.

Sola seemed to calm down. Then Mace brought out his wand, cast a series of complicated spells on the necklace. Complicated counter curses while candles seemed to light themselves. The Mace used his free hand to draw a ring of salt and ground quartz around the girl, Padmé completing it on her side. With a final chant the girl seemed calm again. Mace reached around her neck and removed the necklace. A light seemed to come back to Sola’s eyes immediately. She began crying and hugging her sister. “It was awful. I tried to resist at first but he kept making me do those things. Oh god, Aayla, I nearly killed her!”

“What none of it was your fault. You’re my sister and you never would have done any of that. We all know it. Come on, let’s get you to Madame Che.” As Padmé left with Sola, Anakin looked at Professor Windu.

“He is going to have to come here, isn’t he?”

“Yes, it’s almost certain.”

“When he does, we have to be ready.”

“We?” Windu asked, brow raised.

“Yes, all of us. I don’t think he’s wearing the amulet, but I do think he has it. And if he has it, we have to get it. It’s the best way to stop the attacks.”

“We’ll discuss this with Professor Jinn later. As of now, back to your dorms. And not a word of this to anyone.” The two boys nodded, though Anakin knew full well he’d tell Barriss.

They had to be ready, all of them, for when Dooku came back to Hogwarts.

Chapter End Notes

I'm having way too much fun writing this now that I'm back into it. Also, Wizards are
SO far behind Muggles in so many areas. No lawyers, no jury of peers, a prison system that's actually worse than the prison system in the US...If you want a really badass fic to read about such issues where Harry and Hermione are Ravenclaws and Harry's a child genius, I highly suggest Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality. Just google it, it'll be your first hit. It's hysterical, gut wrenching, and chock full of science. Also, please leave comments. They help almost as much as my lexapro.
The March sun was melting some of the snow around the castle. Dooku had yet to show himself, but Qui-Gon had suggested that doing so too soon would confirm his involvement. A man like Dooku was likely finding an airtight alibi to protect himself first. Professor Billaba said that by the end of the month they’d have a cure for the petrified students. Anakin took heart in that, but it didn’t change the fact that the attacks wouldn’t stop.

He was at his wits’ end. They had no new leads, were no closer to finding the basilisk or the Chamber, and nothing about the amulet. It was late. Well past midnight but Anakin knew he couldn’t sleep. It was a Friday anyway, so he could sleep in tomorrow if he wanted. He was trying to get through a chapter of the latin text that Barriss had deciphered. It was slow going as he had to constantly look up words in his latin book, find the correct conjugations, etc. Eventually, in front of the green fire in the Common Room, his eyes started drooping. He opened them slightly to see the snakes carved into the stone work. In the low light they seemed to be moving. Perhaps it was his bleary vision. But the longer he looked the more he was sure.

They flicked their tongues out, seeming to coil even tighter around the pillars into which they were carved. He thought he heard dim hissing sounds. On a tired and somewhat desperate whim he spoke in Parseltongue. ‘Hello, little ones.’ He didn’t get a response immediately and figured it was because he was a crazy person talking to a stone pillar.

But just as he was about to close his books and head to bed, he heard a reply. ‘Master. We have been waiting.’ They seemed to all speak as one.

Startled and more awake he answered back, ‘Waiting for what?’

‘For you, Master. The true Heir. To fix what has been wronged and save the legacy of Slytherin.’

‘But how? How do I save it?’

‘The Chamber of Secrets. You must enter and claim your right as the Heir.’

‘How do I enter the Chamber?’

‘You need only ask the guardians.’

‘Who are they? Where?’

‘You have all the knowledge you need, Master.’

Anakin tried talking to them more but nothing more came. Eventually he went to bed, sleeping fitfully and dreaming of talking snakes.

When he woke him like a bludger. Of course! If the stone snakes in the Common room could talk, then the ones guarding the archway and in the girls’ bathroom must be able to talk as well.

He stroked his bracelet, sending a message to meet asap. He followed the red thread in the bracelet with his eyes, knowing this had to be done soon if they were going to make the school safe for
Ahsoka and other students. He found Barriss and brought her as well. She deserved to know.

Meeting in one of the many abandoned classrooms before breakfast, the same one where he’d told them about Threepio, Anakin told them about his conversation with the stone snakes in the Common Room, and his theory that the dungeon archway and the bathroom could be opened by speaking to the snakes that served as guardians there.

“Before we try we need to be prepared,” said Padmé. “Here.” She passed out mirrors to the group.

“Makeup compacts?” asked Anakin.

Padmé rolled her eyes. “No, mirrors that let you see around corners or behind you. So we don’t all end up petrified if we find the basilisk.” Her temper had been shorter since the incident with Sola. Sola was recovering but as Padmé had said earlier, “No one messes with my family without answering to me.” She could be quite scary when she wanted to be.

“Brilliant,” said Obi-Wan. “But shouldn’t we also use weapons of some kind?”

“Not much will hurt a basilisk, but Barriss and I had an idea earlier. We’re working on smoke bombs that would confuse an angry snake. Nothing dangerous. Just cedar wood oil, cinnamon, and a little sulfur. Basilisks rely on smell like most serpents, so it could buy us time and confuse it if we need to get away.”

“Anakin is seriously good with making bombs,” Barriss grinned.

“You’re the genius distilling the oils.” Anakin grinned back.

Padmé was the only one who caught Obi-Wan’s frown.

“The snake bombs should be ready in a couple of days. Between that, the mirrors, our wands, we should be ready to go soon. I think we should go at night. I have a feeling that the bathroom is the best place to start.”

“And why’s that?” asked Obi-Wan.

“Well, I tried going the archway early this morning, but the snakes there wouldn’t talk to me. It didn’t feel like an entrance either. I don’t know how else to explain it.”

“Okay, you two let us know when those snake bombs are ready, and we’ll go after curfew. There haven’t been any attacks at night so the basilisk might be there.”

“Should we tell Qui-Gon? Someone should know where we are in case we get into trouble.” Obi-Wan said wisely.

“Ok, but have a House Elf bring a note an hour after we leave. We don’t want to drag anyone else into this unless we have to.” Anakin said.

It was agreed and the group dispersed slowly, trickling down to breakfast separately to avoid suspicions.

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Two days later the snake repellent bombs were done. The were slightly larger than a snitch and made of hardened black paper that students often used for astronomy assignments. The only magic involved was that they were charmed to break and ignite on impact, sending up smoke and smells
that repelled reptiles and confused their senses. Each of them would have four bombs.

Anakin sent out the message, and on Tuesday night he and Barriss snuck out of their dorm just after midnight. They met with Obi-Wan and Padmé just outside the girl’s bathroom on the second floor. Anakin took a deep breath. Bombs had been handed out, wands were at the ready, mirrors in their other hands. They all nodded and entered.

Anakin went straight to the tiny stone snakes carved above the sinks. He closed his eyes, imagining the snakes in his Common Room who he’d talked to. He squinted, imagining that they were alive and moving, that he was talking to Threepio.

‘Hello, little onesss.’ No immediate response but he waited.

‘Massster. Have you finally come to enter the Chamber?’

‘I have. My friendsss and I are going to right the wrong. To sssave Sslytherin.’

‘Thank you, Massster. You may enter and find your birth right.’

The sinks moved apart, revealing a dark tunnel that seemed to lead almost straight down.

“Well, this is it.” He said.

“Winky will deliver the message to Qui-Gon in forty minutes,” Obi-Wan said. “Best get going.”

Anakin nodded and crouched down, figuring he should go first. It felt much like a huge slide, and he kicked off and was descending into darkness. It seemed to go on forever. But finally he hit the bottom. He was propelled at a downward angle onto a stone floor. Though not straight down, at least. He sent a message through the bracelets that it was all clear. Obi-Wan came next, followed by Padmé and lastly Barriss.

After dusting themselves off they looked around. Giant snakes were carved into almost every surface. Around pillars and in the floors and ceiling. There were half crumbled statues, off to the sides, pieces of glass and metal, old portraits, but nothing in the vast cavern to suggest a basilisk. However it seemed to go on for quite a bit.

“Look!” Padmé pointed to the floor in front of them. “The dust has been disturbed looks like footprints. We might not be alone down here.”

Looking more closely there were indeed footprints. “Two sets,” Barriss said. One large and one small.”

Something in Anakin was deeply unsettled. “Let’s follow them, quietly.” They cast Silent Step charms and moved cautiously but quickly down the room, following the footprints through multiple large chambers, bits of bone appearing as they got closer. Thankfully none of it looked human. Anakin got the feeling the were close. He reached out through his magic and felt for presences. He felt something, and held up his hand in a signal to stop. There was a person not far up ahead, and another being as well. It had a strong signature and Anakin suspected it was the basilisk. He silently mouthed “Dooku” and proceeded forward. If they could get the drop on him they could stun him. Moving forward he could hear a man’s voice. It was angry, just short of shouting. Moving closer the stopped being a corner wall to listen.

“-done nothing as you should! You are the creation of Salazar himself! Killing half bloods should be easy! Crucio!”
Padmé hid her gasp behind her hand.

Anakin heard the basilisk cry out. ‘Nooo! Hurtsss. Pleassse.’

No, whatever Dooku was doing, he had to be stopped. He rounded the corner. ‘Petrificus Totalus!’

The Chief Secretary fell down immediately, completely stunned. Anakin had the good sense to close his eyes and turn around, using the mirror to look at the basilisk, hoping it wouldn’t attack him.

Seeing her in the mirror, she was beautiful. Huge with scales that moved from deep green to white and grey to black. She must have been over forty feet long. Her head was large enough for Anakin to sit on. ‘Are you alright?’ He asked the giant. In front of him his other friends were also standing with their backs to the snake and their mirrors out.

The snake seemed to be in great pain, but she raised her head. ‘I am, thanksss to you, young Masssster. The human has the great Masster’s amulet. You mussst take it from him.’

“Dooku has the amulet. I’m going to get it off him,” Anakin told his friends. “You all should stay behind the corner, just in case.” He cautiously approached Dooku, walking backwards. He kneeled when he reached the paralyzed man. It wasn’t around his neck, so he searched pockets. He felt a tingle on the back of his neck, as though something bad were about to happen.

Suddenly another voice rang out. “Finite Incantatem!” Dooku, no longer paralyzed, grabbed Anakin and threw him forcefully across the room. Anakin fell into a pile of discarded portraits and weapons. He stood, kicking aside a sword that broken almost down to the hilt. He considered using it as a knife but no, wands were needed at the moment.

“Sola!” Anakin heard Padmé yell.

Then Dooku was aiming his wand at Anakin. Another “Crucio!” left the man’s lips but Anakin dodged and countered with an Expelliarmus which was deflected.

He was almost hit by a Stupefy from Sola. He didn’t know why Sola was attacking him and helping Dooku but Padmé soon incapacitated her sister with a well placed Incarcerous.

The basilisk was hissing that she wanted to kill Dooku but couldn’t because of the amulet. Anakin wished desperately for the amulet. He had to find it. He had to protect his friends and the school before anyone else go hurt. He felt a weight in his pocket that hadn’t been there a second ago.

‘Massster, you have the amulet!’ the basilisk hissed at him.

Dooku was about to level a curse at Obi-Wan who had joined the fight with Barriss.

“Hey!” Anakin called loudly. “Lose something?” He reached into his robe pocket and produced the amulet. The Angfinitum shone brightly in the chamber. Dooku had turned and had a murderous look on his face.

“Stupefy!” Obi-Wan and Barriss cast at the same time and Dooku went down once again.

‘Masssster, may I kill him?’ Anakin was sorely tempted. But they should bring him back, prove that he was Dark and had hurt people.

‘I wisssh you could, but I mussst bring him to jussstice for what he has done. I am sssory it took me so long to find you. I owe you a great debt.’ He approached the basilisk, looking at her directly since he held the amulet and couldn’t be hurt by her.
What isss your name?

I am Ssunna. He made me hurt studentssss. I am supposssed to protect this sschool, not harm anyone who needsss Hogwartssss. He told me to kill, but I would not. I only paralyzed. I am sssory I hurt those ssstudents. It wasss not my purposse. I wasss created to guard the sschool in times of great need.

You did well. I am sssory he hurt you like that. What can I do to help you?

Let me rest once more. And hide the amulet, ssso that no other pretenders may awaken me.

I will. How do I let you ressst?

You only need allow it. Sssay that you, as the Heir of Ssslytherin, allow Sssunna to rest once more until sshe is called upon again.’ Anakin nodded, petting her scales affectionately.

“I, the Heir of Slytherin, allow Suna to rest once more, until she is called upon again.” Suna flicked her tongue at him affectionately, then curled up, and one by one, her scales fluttered as they turned to stone. Anakin felt her presence become not dead, but at peace.

Is it safe to turn around?” Barriss called.

“Yeah, it’s safe.” Anakin said, a bit sadly.

“Wow,” Obi-Wan said. “She just turned into stone?”

“Yes. She’s sleeping again. Like she was supposed to be. Salazar didn’t create her to kill Witches and Wizards who weren’t pureblood. He created her to protect the school and everyone in it in the event of a true emergency. Dooku found the amulet and forced her to attack students. She was ordered to kill them but she refused. So he tortured her.” He pressed his forehead against the statue. It was over it was finally all over.

Padmé was securing Dooku in ropes as well. Then she went to free Sola. The two were hugging tightly. Padmé was stroking her sister’s hair, both in tears. Padmé stood and Anakin smiled softly at Sola. Her expression towards him was oddly blank. Then she raised her wand and shouted, “Sectumsempra!”

Anakin fell, cuts and lacerations appearing all over his body. Someone screamed. He tried to stop the bleeding at his neck but he was bleeding from his arms, legs, stomach, everywhere. Obi-Wan was leaning over him, trying to apply pressure and cast first aid spells but nothing was working. Anakin noted that there was a lot of blood around him. Instinct told him to keep his hand against the cuts on his neck but he was getting woozy. Bleeding out in a dungeon was really not how he thought he’d die. Everything was getting blurry. He was warm and cold at the same time. Someone was saying his name but they were far away. He thought he heard Qui-Gon but he wasn’t sure. Soon enough everything was black.

Anakin woke nearly three days later. He felt weak but he was definitely alive. Unless the afterlife involved the hospital wing of Hogwarts. No sooner had he yawned than Madame Che was in his room. “Oh good, you’re finally awake. We were all so worried about you. Honestly, running off in the middle of the night like that. Stay still dear.”

She cast several diagnostic spells. “Your red blood cell count is still a bit low but you’re on the mend. Your friends want to see you but no getting out of bed! Understood?”
He nodded. Then couldn’t believe his eyes when Ahsoka came running in. They hugged tightly for a long time. “You’re okay!” She said, relieved. Followed by his “They finally found the cure for petrification!”

“Yep! All the students who were attacked are fine now. Though we all have tons of makeup work to do this summer,” she had unhappily.

Anakin couldn’t stop smiling. Then Obi-Wan, Barriss, and Padmé were there and there was a lot of hugging and crying. He learned that Dooku had put Sola under the Imperius Curse when the necklace failed. The Headmaster was trying to prove that Dooku had illegally controlled a minor twice, but Dooku was saying that he was under the Imperius Curse himself. It was all going to take months in the Wizengamot to sort out. Also exams were cancelled in light of “undue stress” which everyone was happy enough about.

Obi-Wan told them that Qui-Gon had come after them as soon as he’d got the note. Obi-Wan had left instructions about where they thought the entrance was and apparently Threepio had been worried about her Master and coaxed the entrance open once more. Qui-Gon had stopped the Sectumsempra curse but Anakin had lost a lot of blood. He’d called for Winky to apparate them to the Healer’s right away. Anakin had been deathly pale and turning bluish grey in some places. Qui-Gon had had to remove Obi-Wan and Padmé by literally pulling them away from where Madame Che had started healing him. Madame Che had stabilized him but it had been touch and go for the first day. On the second day the petrification victims had been cured. There were flowers in his room that he just noticed. Quite a few of them. Padmé said that people were grateful for what he’d done by stopping the basilisk. Barriss said people felt guilty for accusing Anakin of being a pureblood racist out to murder other students.

Madame Che chased them all out not much longer. Soon after Ashla Tano came in. “I heard you and your friends went up against a Dark Wizard and a basilisk alone. That was reckless and you could have been killed. But thank you for making the school safe for my daughter. You should come stay with us for a bit this summer. I know Ahsoka would appreciate the company.” Before she left she gave him back the picture of he and Ahsoka sitting near the lake their first year.

Anakin was exhausted. He wanted very much to go back to sleep. But Headmaster Yoda and Qui-Gon entered, Professor Windu following behind them.

“What you did was very brave, Anakin.” It was the first time that Yoda had called him by his first name. “To find the amulet, and send the guardian back to sleep was very brave indeed.”

“I didn’t do it alone. Padmé and Barriss and Obi-Wan helped. I’d be dead without them.”

“Yes, you were all very courageous. And I am very sorry that we did not listen to you earlier. We should have let you use your talents to help us find the basilisk. But regardless, we owe you and your friends a great debt.” Yoda pulled the amulet from his pocket and placed on Anakin’s bedside table. “This is a curious object. One thought lost very long ago. Only the true Heir of Slytherin would have been able to call upon this in a time of great need. And only if he was trying to protect the school. There has been much misunderstanding about Salazar and his intents regarding Hogwarts. Perhaps we needed someone like you to properly understand his motivations.”

“He only meant to protect the school. The basilisk, Suna, she said she petrified people because she refused to kill them. She said she wasn’t created to hurt anyone inside Hogwarts. Only outsiders who were trying to hurt those within it. But Dooku found the amulet and forced her to.” Anakin confirmed.

“He’ll be tied up in legal proceedings for months,” Windu said. “But even if we can’t convict, this
will damage his reputation a good deal.”

Anakin nodded, not up to thinking about legal proceedings or politics.

“I must admit, I was worried when you were sorted into Slytherin. But we were wrong. Slytherin is an important part of Hogwarts, and you have brought a measure of balance to the school by acting so selflessly during your time here.” Yoda said quietly.

“Thank you, sir.” Anakin said, grateful but still so very tired.

“We’ll let you rest, now,” Qui-Gon said

Anakin trace the amulet with his fingers, it felt almost alive under his fingers. On instinct he put it under his pillow and fell into a deep sleep.

Things got back to more or less normal over the next couple of weeks. He no longer got treated like a murderer, but several Slytherins seemed disappointed that he hadn’t led some kind of campaign to kill all non-purebloods. Barriss assured her parents he was just waiting until he was more powerful, that he knew he couldn’t get caught so young. Anakin had laughed quite a bit over that.

Sola had tried apologizing multiple times for nearly killing him. Every time he told her it wasn’t her fault that Dooku had put her under the Imperius. By April she mostly believed him.

Owen had come to see him, scared when an owl had tapped on his window at four in the morning with a letter saying that Anakin was in critical condition at Hogwarts. He’d demanded that Windu put a fireplace with a floo connection in his home so he could talk to Anakin without owls being involved. Headmaster Yoda payed for it himself. Owen had been a bit hysterical at the mention of a giant snake and a curse that had nearly caused his charge to bleed to death. Padmé’s parents hadn’t fared much better, upset that their youngest daughter had been manipulated twice and their oldest had run off after a basilisk.

Obi-Wan had asked him to spend the summer with him and Qui-Gon again. But Anakin said he wanted to spend some time at his own home. Then he’d be staying with Ahsoka and Ashla for a bit, but that he’d spend the last three weeks of summer with his friend and Transfigurations teacher. He was even considering spending a few days with Barriss’ family, though he was a bit terrified of meeting her parents.

By the end of term he was happier than he had been in months. He had his friends back, he had a summer to look forward to. And because of him and Barriss, Slytherin had won the House Cup. And at least half of the student body had been happy for them. Or at least 35%. But it was progress. As he boarded the Hogwarts Express for London where Owen would meet him, he had a good feeling about the next few months.

Chapter End Notes

And year two ends. Hope it was enjoyable! As always, comments keep me going.
The summer had been fantastic. He’d spent the first month with Owen, getting to re-know his cousin after almost two years apart. And he’d given Owen a fair sum of money from his vaults. Owen had balked, but Anakin insisted, saying that Owen had taken him in as a single young man who was barely twenty-five and raised a little boy he hadn’t asked for. Anakin had some gold converted into pounds and Owen had moved them from their crap rental to a new home which Owen now owned. It wasn’t large, but it had three bedrooms, a garage, and the fireplace with Floo connection which Master Yoda had once again paid for.

He’d also met Owen’s girlfriend, Beru Whitesun. She spoke with an American accent and had told Anakin stories about growing up as part of the Iroquois tribe and how she’d moved here for school. Anakin thought it was amazing that she was studying chemical engineering. When Owen had to work or was trying to learn coding from his online courses, sometimes she’d teach him chemistry. He had a knack for it and she was a good teacher. When they weren’t doing science experiments or cooking, he and Owen were working on his car. Owen understandably had a lot of questions about the Wizarding World which Anakin was happy to fill him in on.

Then he’d spent almost three weeks with Ahsoka and Ashla. They’d played Quidditch almost everyday after she was done with her make up course work and he was done reading one of the Transfigurations texts he’d gotten for Christmas. They were both upset to learn that the Wizengamot had believed Dooku’s story about being under The Imperius. At least Padmé had written to tell them that she and her family knew the truth, and they’d be on their guard against him and his ilk.

He’d spent a few days as guests of the Offees as well. Barriss’ father was out of town on business but her mother was quite intimidating. However they were left to their own devices most of the time and aside from a few comments about “that useless Headmaster needing to find better accommodations for Anakin Skywalker than to be living with Muggles” it had gone rather well. Barriss taught him to ride a horse, and they dueled, played chess, and she helped him with Latin which he was getting quite good at.

Then he’d flooed back to Owen’s before he was off to see Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan for the rest of the summer.

He hugged Owen, promising to firecall when he got to school as well as write more, and stepped into the fireplace yelling “Light's Hold” and disappearing to Qui-Gon’s home.

“Anakin!” He was quickly enveloped in a hug by Obi-Wan who’d grown a bit taller.

“Hi, Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon,” the boy said happily. Obi-Wan grabbed trunk and drug it to his room while Anakin carried Artoo’s cage and Threepio happily slithered off his arm to go visit her old hunting grounds in Qui-Gon’s yard.

The weeks at Qui-Gon’s home went by at a leisurely pace. He got a jump on studying, asking Qui-Gon a million questions about Transfigurations. Qui-Gon told him that his father, Lucan Skywalker, had been gifted in the subject as well. Had even been an Animagus who could take the form of an Eagle Owl. Anakin was amazed, wondering what flying without needing a broom would feel like. He made a note to check the older Year Books in the library when he got back. He wanted to learn
as much about his parents as he could.

He and Obi-Wan ran Chaser’s drills together, and Anakin showed him some of the dueling techniques Barriss had taught him.

“Are you sure you two aren’t together?” Obi-Wan had asked.

“I promise, Obi-Wan. Barriss is my friend but we are not, and never will be, dating. It gets her parents off her back for people to assume we are and it’s not a bad deal for either since she’s a good friend who’s taught me a lot.”

“But about when you meet someone you do want to date?” They were leaning up against the same tree as they had before school last year.

“You mean one of the people who thought I was an aspiring murderer?” He laughed. “Please. I think I’ll be single until I graduate.”

Obi-Wan laughed and pushed his auburn hair out of his eyes. Anakin’s stomach did an odd swoop at that but he ignored it. It was getting easier to do lately.

Qui-Gon called them in, which was odd as it was nowhere near dinner.

Standing in the small kitchen though, they watched him pace while holding a copy of the Daily Prophet, a scowl on his face.

“What is it?” Obi-Wan asked. Qui-Gon stopped pacing and faced them. “There’s been a breakout from Azkaban,” he said seriously. “I need you to both be calm when I tell you this. But Ajunta Paal has escaped, and is reported to be on the loose.”

The color drained from Obi-Wan’s face and Anakin could feel his distress through their bond. Anakin put an arm around his friend. “Who’s that? And I thought that Wizarding prisons were impossible to break out of.”

“He helped killed my parents,” Obi-Wan said faintly.

“And your father,” Qui-Gon said, looking at Anakin. “He was one of the Dark Lord’s favorite followers. Assumed to be his right hand man by many. A master at infiltrating and disguising himself, he could get into places that no one else could.”

“And now he’s gotten out of Azkaban,” Obi-Wan said. “Do you think- will he be after us?”

“I don’t know what his motives might be. But rest assured that security measures will be increased at Hogwarts this year,” Qui-Gon said. “And you two must not go looking for him, no matter what. Please promise me that right now.”

Both boys promised and Qui-Gon hugged them both. “The best Aurors are on this. They’ll catch him.”

Later that night neither boy could sleep. Obi-Wan knocked on Anakin’s door. They both sat on his bed, the lamp softly illuminating the room and Artoo asleep between them.

“I remember him,” Obi-Wan said. “I remember when he came into our house. I saw his face but not the Dark Lord’s. But I remember how mum told me to hide. He killed mum right away, but I remember hearing dad scream for ages. Kept telling him that I was with family somewhere else. When the Aurors found me they called Qui-Gon. I didn’t speak to anyone for months.”
Anakin hugged his friend tightly. “I’m sorry.” They fell asleep together half sitting and tangled awkwardly.

Back on the Hogwarts Express, they shared a compartment with Ahsoka and Barriss. As the train pushed through the rainy Scottish countryside, they discussed the Azkaban escape only briefly. They wondered how someone could break out of a magical prison without a wand. Ahsoka said that there were accounts of famous wizards with small Animagi forms “disappearing” only to eventually be found out. Barriss posited that despite using dementors, there were also guards at Azkaban, and guards could always be bribed.

Obi-Wan said he didn’t care how he got out as long as someone killed him soon, which had ended the conversation.

Drawing closer to school, a chill seemed to fall over the compartment. Anakin pulled his robes tight around him and Artoo hissed at the door. Shapes moved outside the windows, ghostly and dark. “What’s going on?” Anakin asked.

“Dementors,” said Barriss. She was shivering and leaning back from the door.

The train screeched to a halt and the chill increased, but with it came the feeling of hopelessness. Anakin felt as though nothing in the world mattered at all and it would be impossible to ever feel happy again. Something was outside their compartment door. Then it was opening it. Anakin hadn’t known that a creature like this could exist. It was like a living nightmare, made of evil intent and despair. It didn’t have eyes, but it had a horrible mouth with no teeth. It had no legs but arms that were reaching for him, promising to end suffering the only way it knew how.

And in a brilliant flash of four legged silver it was gone.

Qui-Gon stood in the doorway now. “Are all of you alright?” They nodded, shaken but ok. Anakin hugged Artoo to his chest. “I can’t believe the Ministry sent dementors of all things to guard the school.” Qui-Gon was angry, and Qui-Gon never got angry. “I have to check on the other students. We should be moving again shortly but let me know if you need anything.” He took off down the train.

“Those are dementors? And the Ministry uses them? Are they all mad?” Anakin asked, still hugging Artoo.

“Was that Qui-Gon’s patronus?” Barriss asked, trying to shake the cold and dread from herself.

“Yes, it’s a German Shepherd,” said Obi-Wan, leaning towards Anakin.

“I kept thinking that nothing mattered. That I’d feel cold and empty forever,” Ahsoka said, looking off into the distance. Barriss passed out chocolate frogs as the train began moving again.

“They’re abominations,” she stated frankly.

Anakin silently agreed. He also made a note to get Qui-Gon to teach him the Patronus Charm as soon as possible if those things were going to be around the castle.

The Welcoming Feast was a warm refuge from the the dreary rain. Anakin barely paid attention to the Sorting or Yoda’s speech. Barriss nudged him and asked him if he was alright.
“Fine, yeah, just a little tired,” he’d answered. She didn’t believe him but let it slide for the moment. He settled into bed that night after talking halfheartedly with his dorm mates. Petro had apparently been bullied a bit for being a half-blood Slytherin, but Anakin made sure to let him know that he’d gladly put anyone who gave him a hard time for that in their place. Lux had nodded his agreement as well, and Tyzen said that Slytherin was Slytherin and they’d stick by him no matter what.

Threepio made herself known and none of his dorm mates were scared of her, which was nice. He told them about how she’d tried to help last year with the basilisk and wanted to protect students, just like Suna had. Tyzen had been brave enough to hold her and she’d warmed to him instantly.

Anakin went to bed looking forward to Transfigurations in the morning.

He couldn’t quite believe they were starting with Animagus transformation theory straight away. Qui-Gon told them that this would be a theoretical study, as most Wizards never became Animagi, but Anakin was determined to learn. The theory was quite complex but he was sure he could get it. The extra reading he’d done over the summer had helped quite a bit. He stayed after class to talk to Qui-Gon.

“What can I do for you, Anakin?” His teacher asked kindly.

“The Patronus Charm,” Anakin said, not wasting time. “I was hoping you could teach me. If those things are going to be around the school, I want to know how to defend myself.”

Qui-Gon fixed him with a serious look. “Are you quite sure? It a difficult Charm to cast, and it takes a good deal of patience and mental focus to do.”

“I’m sure. I’ve never felt so empty before. It was so close to me.” Anakin shuddered. “And it was close to the people I care about most, to my family. I could practically hear its voice in my head.”

“I understand. We can certainly try. Obi-Wan has also expressed interest in learning this skill. Perhaps a small group would be a good size to work with. No more than six people though. Let me know by the end of the week.”

Anakin beamed, thanking his Professor and heading on to Divinations. He honestly wasn’t sure how to feel about a class based on mystical arts, even though he’d gone through most of the textbook. How were you supposed to grade someone on that?

He found the classroom and took a seat with Tyzen, behind Barriss who was sitting with Sola. At least they had this with the Ravenclaws. Maybe someone else would be as skeptical as he was. Their Professor entered the room. He was a dark skinned man with a broad nose. His long black hair was kept in medium sized locs and tied back, showing off the thick light green crystal that pierced one of his ear lobes. Anakin had seen him at the staff table but never up close. The man was really quite handsome. Not that he’d think of a professor that way. Ever. Barriss turned back towards him, noticed him staring and snickered.

“Welcome to Divination. I’m Professor Kolar, and despite what you may have heard, this class is not an easy O. If you slack off in here, you will face the same penalties as you would in any other class. Not everyone has the aptitude for reading energies, tea leaves, or cards. I don’t expect you to. I do however expect you to approach the history and theory of these traditions seriously. Divination is not something practiced by bored old women. And let’s examine the sexism in that statement at another time. (Barriss perked up at that.) It is however, a very real and important tradition that has shaped the magical world in times of war and peace. Now, let’s begin. Page fifteen in your texts. Who can tell me about the importance of star charting for charming objects of protection?”
Sola raised her hand. “Yes, Miss Amidala?”

“Star charting for protection is a complicated mathematical process to find the ideal time of month and year and under which constellation a protective charm would be strongest for an individual, given that person’s birth date.”

“Excellent, Miss Amidala. Five points for Ravenclaw.” Sola flushed proudly.

“And who can tell me the limits of star charting for protection or future scrying?”

Anakin tentatively raised his hand. “Mr. Skywalker?”

“Well, sir, star charting is like a guide. It’s a vague map but not a detailed one, and it’s static. One reading could take hours, but if you take another one when you’re done with that one, you could get a different reading altogether. Some people theorize that if you glimpse a true reading, you’ve changed the path or event you were trying to understand just by observing or understanding it.” Anakin was more familiar with this concept when it came to physics and ideas like Schroedinger’s cat, but he was fairly confident that he was on the right track with this.

“Very well put, Mr. Skywalker. Five points to Slytherin. Your father was gifted with the arts of Divination. Perhaps we will see if you too have that gift. Now, onto the most common uses of star charting.” Anakin had no idea his father had been adept at such a thing, thought it figured as he’d worked at the Department of Mysteries. He really didn’t know who his parents had been at all. This weekend he would visit the old Year Books in the library, he mentally noted. He wasn’t sure he wanted to be able to tell the future. It seemed like a kind of vision you could never really trust and even his father who’d had such gifts had been killed.

The last class of the day was Care of Magical Creatures which he thankfully had with the Gryffindors. Even since the issues of Second Year, hostilities between the two houses were at an all time low. They were all waiting outside by the lake for Professor Fisto to meet them.

Finally the man appeared. He had long green hair which he kept in several braided plaits, light skin, and dark eyes. Several girls giggled as he approached. He was carrying a trunk of something that seemed to be protesting being carried.

“Right then. Today we’re starting off with grindylows. You should all have brushed up on your Relashio spells, as you’ll need them. Grindylows are quite nasty, xenophobic little things. If you’ll please remove your outer robes and shoes and roll up your pants. Yes, that’s it, hurry up now.” Anakin exchanged concerned looks with Ahsoka. “Now we’ll start in pairs. I’ll let them out one at a time, and one of you will move forward to distract it, and the other will cast Relashio. Ready? Excellent, let’s get going. Miss Tano, Mr. Skywalker, if you’d be so kind as to go first.”

“You’re totally bait, Skyguy.” Ahsoka said. Anakin sighed and readied himself to approach a pissed off octopus. He waded into the lake, shin deep, and Fisto let one of the creatures out of the cage. It immediately made for Anakin, latching two tentacles onto him and getting its mouth as close to his arm as it could. Ahsoka’s spell worked before he was bitten, though he was soaking wet, having fallen half way into the lake.

The class actually went well overall. He saved Ahsoka on their next turn, everyone got wet and was pretending to be grumpy but were actually loving it. Only one student got nicked by grindylow teeth and Rex wasn’t mad at all over Riyo being too nervous to get her spell off properly the first time.

After a shower and dinner, Anakin, Padmé, Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, and Barriss were at their spot by the lake. Not so far from where they’d been fighting grindylows earlier. Ahsoka was talking about how
much she loved Care of Magical Creatures and teasing that Anakin loved Divinations.

“Really?” Asked Obi-Wan. “Didn’t figure you the type for crystal balls and incense.”

“There’s more to it than that. Plus apparently my dad was really good at it. Maybe it was part of why he worked at the Department of Mysteries.” Anakin replied.

“Oh, that’s fantastic. Maybe you have the gift,” Obi-Wan smiled genuinely.

“Doesn’t help that Anakin has a thing for a certain someone in class,” Barriss cackled in her best evil tone.

“Barriss, I love you, but I will murder you.” Anakin said.

“Oooh, who is it?” Ahsoka demanded. “Come on, we’re your best friends. We should know these things about you.”

“I don’t know who you like,” Anakin countered. “Besides, it’s nothing. Barriss thinks that every time I look at someone for more than five seconds I have new crush.”

“If I tell you my crush, you have to tell me yours.” Ahsoka said with finality. “Deal?”

Anakin was so not prepared for this. “I don’t have a crush!”

“So if Riyo asks you out you’re gonna say no? I have to ask. It’s the friend code among girls.”

Anakin sputtered. “Riyo likes me?”

“Duh, Skyguy. She’s so nervous around you that it’s adorably obvious.”

“I um, I’m really flattered, but I just don’t feel that way about her.” Anakin said, while looking at the ground.

“Maybe we should go full beard,” Barriss suggested. “You know. Hold hands a little, get caught kissing once or twice, it would keep unwanted attention away.”

Anakin sort of hated getting older. “Look, as fascinating as all this is, “ he said, “I need to ask you all something. I talked to Qui-Gon earlier and asked if he’d teach me the Patronus Charm. I hate the idea of those monsters flying around school. He said yes. He also said a small group would be a good way to learn. Six people max. So does anyone else want to learn?

“Oh my god, I’ve wanted to learn that for ages! I’m absolutely in!” Padmé exclaimed.

Obi-Wan and Ahsoka also agreed. So did Barriss, saying she’d ask Sola to make it an even six.

Having conversation back on something interesting and away from checking out one professor once for like five seconds was incredibly refreshing. Until Obi-Wan said he had to run to meet Satine. Well, not everything could be perfect, but it could be good enough.

Chapter End Notes

Yay, Patronus charms! Also this year the gang will begin training to become Animagi.
What did Anakin's dad do at the Department of Mysteries? What did he know or want
to know that got him killed? Comments are always extremely welcome/needed.
It was Saturday morning and Anakin was still sore from Quidditch practice the previous night. He nearly slept through breakfast so he hurried down to grab some toast and bacon last minute. Now that Luminara had graduated, a sixth year named Kao Chen had been voted captain. Kao had always been quiet and had left Anakin alone while everyone else thought he was a murderer, as most fifth years had been focusing on their O.W.L.S. But as a captain he was demanding, making sure everything was perfect. They’d be needing a new seeker this year as well, and Anakin felt badly for some of the students who’d be trying out under his watchful eyes. Kao was a beater along with Quinlan Vos who was now a Seventh Year, and together the pair was incredibly formidable.

Anakin slid in beside Obi-Wan and grabbed for the toast. “Someone slept in,” the Hufflepuff boy noted with amusement.

“Chen is a maniac. But we’re going to be in great shape with him as captain. Better practice your quaffle saves.” Anakin replied cheerfully.

“Sounds like a good team for me to play Seeker with,” with Barriss said nonchalantly, causing conversation to come to a halt at their table.

“I thought you hated Quidditch?” Sola asked.

“I hate watching it. But playing is a different matter. Besides, single-minded focus is a skill of mine. It’s worth a shot. And mum would think it’s a horrid waste of time when I should be keeping my mind one future husbands. It’s a win-win.”

“Your parents really want you to think about marriage at thirteen? Even with Anakin as your fake boyfriend?” Padmé asked.

“I mean not seriously. Dad actually thinks quidditch would be great. Mum just thinks it’s not ‘lady like’ enough and that ‘boys don’t like girls who fly around in the rain and mud’.” Barriss rolled her eyes and Anakin laughed at the spot on impersonation Barriss could do of her mother.

The owls overhead were delivering mail, and and dozens of copies of the Daily Prophet. Barriss’ owl, Bellaxus, dropped one of such copies in her lap. Padmé gasped as she was delivered a copy as well.

“What is it?” Anakin asked. Barriss silently handed him her paper. Along with the mugshot he’d already seen of Ajunta Paal, there was a new mugshot. One of a truly terrifying looking witch. The name under the photo read Kreia Acri. The title on the front page read ‘Second Breakout from Azkaban in Two Months. Death Eaters at Large’.

There was no information about how either had escaped, only speculations and Aurors offering ‘no comments at this time’.

“This is absurd! Are the Aurors useless?” Obi-Wan said angrily. “Two breakouts, and if the monsters guarding that place couldn’t keep them in, how are they supposed to keep them out of Hogwarts?” Anakin felt his panic and tried to push a sense of comfort through their bond, putting his hand on Obi-Wan’s knee under the table.
“I have to agree,” said Padmé with more calm but still with an edge of frustration. “They can’t bring those things here and say it’s for our own good if they can’t even guard Azkaban. It’s putting students at risk. Dementors don’t have morals or even higher cognitive processes. I’m starting a petition. For students and parents. No Dementors at Hogwarts. We’ll present it to Minister Valorum if we have to.”

Everyone nodded in agreement. “In the meantime,” Anakin said. We should go meet Qui-Gon.” They agreed and left, heading towards the Transfigurations classroom. When they arrived, Qui-Gon had pushed all the tables and chairs to the back of the room, leaving a large open space for them to use. Once they were all settled and attentive he began. “A Patronus Charm is not an easy feat. I don’t expect any of you to get it right the first try, or even by the end of our first session. In fact, for the first hour, we’ll be meditating.” He conjured seven round pillows on the floor and they all took their spots. “I want you to clear your minds, but instead of just keeping them clear, I want you to focus on happy memories you have. Let them come and examine each one. See if one brings you more joy than another, and consider why. Sola, Barriss, I don’t know how much experience you have with meditating, but it’s helpful to view unwanted thoughts as raindrops. Let them slide away peacefully so you can bring your attention back to your purpose. Now, please begin.”

Anakin cleared his mind and began. He thought of the happiest times he could. Laughing with Owen even though they were flat broke. Learning he was a Wizard. Meeting Ahsoka and agreeing that they’d be friends no matter what before the Sorting. Meeting Obi-Wan and laughing in the library, getting detention together and then turning detention into a sponge fight. Realizing he had three amazing friends and that they’d do anything for each other, vowing to protect the school together. Chasing a basilisk and being reunited with Ahsoka at the end of the year. Laughing with Barriss in the Common Room, knowing that despite everything he’d still be friends with Obi-Wan no matter what. He pulled those thoughts around him like a suit of armor. When Qui-Gon gently said it was time to start practicing he couldn’t believe it had been an hour.

He taught them all the wand motion first. It was a delicate movement that ended in a forceful push with the wrist. Once they all had it down, they were given a brief lecture on what it meant. “Expecto Patronum is not simply a focusing tool as in many spells. It’s a command for the spell and for the caster. It’s meaning is ‘I await a guardian’. You are drawing protective powers from inside yourself to protect yourself and others from an external threat. That’s why focusing on your absolute best memories is vital. You need that happiness to overpower the despair of a dementor. Wrap your joy and your protectiveness up together. If it helps, try to remember times when you felt safe as well. Now let’s begin. Padmé, if you wouldn’t mind being first.”

Padmé nodded and stepped forward. Qui-Gon had constructed a dummy dementor at the front of the room. Padmé thought of her happiest memory, of sneaking off with her sister and Palo during some unspeakably boring dinner party and laughing as Palo’s younger brother let very real looking fake mice into the cocktail lounge, Palo holding her around the waist because they were laughing so hard. As she called out “Expecto Patronum!” a silvery wisp left her wand. It didn’t have a definite shape but it had wings, undefined as they were.

“Excellent!” Qui-Gon beamed. “Very few people manage such a solid form on their first go. Well done.”

Padmé blushed happily and stood back. Barriss and Sola only managed brief silvery bursts. Obi-Wan didn’t fare much better as he had a larger silvery burst. Ahsoka managed something that seemed to have four legs, and then it was Anakin’s turn. He focused on his friends, knowing they’d always stand up together. He thought of protecting the school, vowing to do right by it like Suna had. He thought of holding Obi-Wan’s hand for the first time and wrapped all those thoughts up together in
the magic that was always present around him.

“Expecto Patronum!” A very large adder, all ethereal scales and effervescent erupted from his wand. It did an inspection of the room, then waiting patiently in front of Anakin as though waiting for orders. Anakin stood in awe of it.

“It’s beautiful,” Obi-Wan murmured.

“Hello,” Anakin said to it in Parseltongue. “Please tell Qui-Gon I ssaid I’m fine.” The adder slid over to where Qui-Gon stood smiling. In Anakin’s own voice it repeated “Please tell Qui-Gon I’m fine.” And promptly disappeared.

“Fantastic!” Qui-Gon laughed. “It’s unheard of for someone to successfully perform the Patronus on a first try.”

“How’d you do it,” asked Padmé?

Anakin was blushing. “I just thought of all of you, how happy I am that we have each other, and then I thought of our Vows, how we said we’d protect the school no matter what, and protection is what a Patronus Charm is about, so I wrapped all those thoughts up together and just, pushed them out.”

Padmé was determined to try again. After two hours and a few breaks for chocolate supplied by Qui-Gon, Padmé and Anakin both had fully formed Patronuses. Padmé’s eagle was fully formed and did several laps around the room. She flushed happily when Qui-Gon told her that Professor Gallia hadn’t overestimated her ability with Charms.

Sola was frustrated but determined to continue working on it, as was Barriss. Ahsoka couldn’t get passed a vague shape with four thick legs, but was happy enough with her progress.

As their group left and dispersed, Obi-Wan pulled Anakin aside in the empty hallway. “Do you think I’m not thinking of something happy enough? I really want to get this.”

“Well, what’s the memory or memories you’re using?” Anakin asked.

Obi-Wan blushed a bit. “Um, well, kissing Satine. But I think maybe that’s not my happiest memory after all. I thought it should be, but what if it’s not?”

“Obi-Wan, you’re fourteen. It’s not like you’re going to marry Satine. She’s just a girl you like. You have to focus on real happiness. Family, friends, that kind of thing. Find a memory that’s rooted in a real connection to other people. One that’s worth protecting.”

“What was yours?”

“Us, standing together in front of the school my First Year. Knowing that the friendship we have is strong and lasting. That’s something I wanted to protect.”

“For someone younger than me you’re pretty wise,” Obi-Wan smiled.

“It’s because my brain isn’t caught up in chasing after girls,” Anakin said smugly.

Obi-Wan laughed and headed off to Quidditch practice.

They were both in the stands the next day, along with Padmé and Sola, to watch Slytherin tryouts.
Well, Anakin was on the field, but still. If Barriss was nervous she didn’t show it. She took off during the scrimmage, high above the rest of the players. She’d practiced this a bit with Anakin over the summer, but she focused everything she had on keeping an eye out for the Snitch. She dodged through the bludgers that Chen and Vos hurled at her with ease, small and fast on her broom. After what felt like forever she spotted the golden flutter of wings. She made for it as fast as she could, weaving through players and going into a steep dive. She sped through Anakin Lux who was also trying out, catching the Snitch less than twenty feet from the ground. Anakin whooped happily. It was a fantastic catch and anyone else trying for Seeker had a high bar set for them.

At the end of the hours-long tryouts, Lux made Chaser and Barriss made Seeker. Tyzen, surprising everyone, had tried out for Keeper and made it. Anakin felt that this year’s team would be the best yet.

On Monday, Padmé, Bant, Aayla, and Quinlan started circulating their petition. The wording was brief and to the point. They felt there was no reason for Dementors to be at Hogwarts and that if they had failed to keep Death Eaters in Azkaban, they wouldn’t be able to keep them out of Hogwarts. Professor Windu had cosigned the creation of the petition. Anakin and Obi-Wan signed it immediately. He asked Quinlan about it in the Common Room and the handsome Seventh Year had stuttered, saying it was a danger to the students. Anakin suspected he was doing it to impress Aayla Secura.

By Thursday the petition had the signatures of almost the entire student body and many Professors. Padmé said she had sent it to her parents to present at the Wizengamot meeting next month, but had of course made multiple copies that she’d kept. She said if the Wizengamot and Minister wouldn’t listen, they’d consider protests and striking. Anakin and Barriss were impressed with Padmé’s political prowess.

Divinations class that week was interesting to say the least. They were practicing tea readings. The textbook had explained that this was a limited form of scrying, but some people did have an aptitude for it. After draining their mugs of tea and conversing with their partners on a subject regarding the future, they were supposed to read the remains. Tyzen and Anakin discussed winter break and what they would do for Christmas. It seemed benign enough. Anakin was looking forward to flying around the grounds with Obi-Wan and Tyzen was looking forward to seeing his cousins from Germany.” Tyzen tried to read Anakin’s leaves first. “Um, I think this may be…” he consulted the book for common tea leaf images. “A smiley face? I don’t think I’m very good at this.” He said apologetically.

Anakin took Tyzen’s mug. He looked at the leaves in the bottom, but tried to focus on the the pull of magic rather than the leaves themselves. There was an odd way the magic seemed to hone in on the mug he was holding. “It’s a rune, I think, one sec.” He consulted the rune dictionary in the back of the textbook. “It’s family. And something else. Gaining family. You’re going to gain a family member?”

Tyzen looked a bit shocked. “Mum’s pregnant,” he whispered. “But no one’s supposed to know. She has a history of miscarriage and didn’t want to tell anyone until right up until the baby was born.” Professor Kolar approached them, and Tyzen told him quietly about Anakin’s reading.

“Well done, Mr. Skywalker. Five points to Slytherin. Now, what was Mr. Skywalker’s reading, Mr. Xebec?”

“Well, I don’t think I’m very good at this,” Tyzen said. “I can’t really tell what this is.” Professor Kolar took the mug and Anakin tried very hard not to think about how attractive the man was.
“This is not a good omen, Mr. Skywalker. In fact, I’d daresay you should be on your guard during the time frame you were thinking about while drinking your tea.” Then he moved on to Sola and Barriss. Sola apparently had read both her and Barriss’ cups perfectly and was awarded ten points.

Anakin slumped. He wanted a normal year. He didn’t want to have to be on his guard yet again.

Back in their Patronus session with Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan was making progress. He also had four feet for his now. Barriss was also improving. She had four legs, a short tail, and pointed ears. All features on different tries, but she was getting there. Sola’s Patronus also seemed to have wings, but was much smaller. Anakin was talking to Barriss, telling her about wrapping joy and protection up in one thought. Her eyes widened as though she’d made a discovery. Even though it wasn’t her turn she called out ‘Expecto Patronum!’ And an odd looking cat, fully formed, shot out of her wand.

“It’s a caracal,” she said proudly. “I saw one when we were visiting family in Africa when I was very young. My father woke me up before dawn to go see it. She’d taken down a large bird and was feeding her cubs. He told me that’s what parental love was. Protecting and providing until a child could stand on their own. He said he’d teach me anything I needed to know and protect me until I was ready.”

“Was that the memory you used?” Anakin asked.

“No, but I did find one worth protecting.” She blushed for the first time he could remember. Sola looked a bit sheepish as well and Anakin exchanged a smile with Padmé.

The first Quidditch match of the year was about to start. Ravenclaw vs. Gryffindor.

Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Barriss were sitting in the Gryffindor stands. They’d made gaudy “Ahsoka is #1” banners and planned on cheering loudly and obnoxiously. Padmé and Sola were with Ravenclaw, but they were wearing buttons that said “Go Ahsoka!” on them.

Ravenclaw played an excellent offensive game with their Chasers scoring endless points. However despite Hufflepuff’s best strategies, Ahsoka was one of the best seekers the school had ever seen and the match was over with Gryffindor scratching out just above Ravenclaw in the end.

Students were leaving the stadium and in all the commotion, it was too late before anyone noticed a Dementor get close. It descended near where Ahsoka was, and Anakin’s blood ran cold. Before he could think he was casting ‘Expecto Patronum’, and his adder along with Padmé’s eagle and Barriss’ Caracal had chased the dementor off. Anakin and Obi-Wan pushed through the crowds, running to Ahsoka. She looked shaken and winded but alright. Qui-Gon picked her up as though she didn’t weigh anything. She clutched at his robes as he carried her to the castle.

“It got really close to her,” Rex told Anakin. It was practically on top of her and we couldn’t do anything about it.” He was shaken as well but also angry. “She pushed me and Riyo out of the way. Padmé was right. Those things have no business being at our school.”

Anakin nodded and headed to the Healer’s wing with Obi-Wan and Padmé.

They were made to wait for some time, but finally Madame Che let them in.

Ahsoka told them how it had descended straight for her. “I couldn’t breathe and it was right on me. I tried to cast the Patronus Charm but it was so close. It put its mouth right over mine.” Anakin hugged
her tightly until Madame Che gave her a calming draught.

Once they’d left Ahsoka to sleep, Padmé said they should use the following weekend to protest in Hogsmeade. They were all old enough to go now, and this was outrageous. A student nearly faced a fate worse than death.

Everyone else agreed. No escaped lunatics were worth this.

Later he and Padmé were talking privately, just before dinner. “Don’t you think it’s unethical to use dementors at all?” Anakin asked. “I mean, prison is one thing, but a prison where you’re forced to feel as though you’d never be able to feel joy again, then having your very soul destroyed? Most civilized Muggle countries don’t even use the death penalty. Monsters like the Dementors shouldn’t have a use in the world at all.”

“I agree, but the Wizengamot is full of very old Witches and Wizards who would sooner lose an arm than change the way anything is done. Even if the way it’s done is inhumane or dangerous. It’s why I want to go into politics.”

“When I first learned there was a magical world, I thought it must be perfect,” Anakin said. “That magic somehow would erase the hundreds of thousands of years of terrible things that people did to each other. But it doesn’t. It just a different set of weapons.” He concluded sadly.

“Yes, but a different set of tools to use for good as well. And think about it. We’ve done more for uniting Hogwarts in three years than people have done in centuries. We can do it in the larger magical world. We just have to be willing to work for it.”

“That’s true. Thanks, Padmé.” He smiled at her before heading off for his dorm consider what else could be done to protect against insane Wizards.

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Since that Saturday was a Hogsmeade weekend, they met with Qui-Gon on Thursday evening. Ahsoka was determined to get her Patronus Charm to work. She’d been working on it constantly, she said, late at night when no one else in Gryffindor was awake in the Common Room. She did well through meditation, and said she wanted to go first.

She brought her wand up, and focused her thoughts. She thought of sitting by the lake with Anakin and Obi-Wan and Padmé and Rex one night last year. How Anakin had said something about how family is who you choose, and her looking at her bracelet and thinking that she’d certainly chosen hers. She thought of being brave for them, like they’d been for her when she’d been petrified. How she was so grateful they were in her life and she wished she could scoop them up and keep them safe in some tower forever, but she also loved the adventures she’d had with these people, with her family.

Then she cast. A lioness erupted from her wand, shimmery and perfect and surprisingly large. She grinned from ear to ear. It loped easily about, then settled at her feet, attentive, nearly as tall as she was. After a few moments of inactivity it vanished. “YES!” she crowed. She hugged Anakin, hugged them all in turn.

“You have the coolest Patronus,” Sola said.

“You must have a very brave spirit indeed,” Qui-Gon said smiling.

“I am never going to get this,” Obi-Wan sighed.

“Yes you are. And I’ll help you until you do.” Anakin said. “Plus I need your help with Herbology
and Potions theory, so it’ll be a trade.”

“You have never needed help with Potions,” Obi-Wan said accusingly.

“No, but the theories behind Herbology are important to Potions, and I need help with them.”

“Fine. Now help me with his,” Obi-Wan relented. Qui-Gon was helping Sola so Anakin moved to Obi-Wan’s corner of the room and moved to stand behind him.

“First of all your stance is too tense. Relax your shoulders a bit like this,” Anakin placed his hands on his friend’s shoulders and gently pushed them back and down. “Now, just don’t think of what makes you happy in the short term. Think of what makes you grateful that it or they are in your life. How much you want to protect that, make sure it always is in your life. It can be multiple things or people. Imagine on thread wrapping around those thoughts, binding them so that it’s one entity that you can and will protect.” Anakin slid his hand along Obi-Wan’s outstretched wand arm, lightly touching the base of his wrist. “Keep all that love and happiness and attachment in your mind.” He felt Obi-Wan exhale. “Now cast.”

At the Hufflepuff’s ‘Expecto Patronum’, a badger erupted. “A badger?” Obi-Wan queried, though he was smiling.

“Well you are a Hufflepuff,” Anakin said smiling. “If it’s good enough to be a House mascot, then it’s pretty cool that it’s your Patronus.” Obi-Wan smiled back.

Qui-Gon had an odd look on his face. “What is it, Professor Jinn?” Padmé asked.

“Nothing bad, I assure you. It is odd for students to grasp the complex emotions needed to form a Patronus so soon though. And it’s interesting that four of your bear the Patroni of the four Founders of Hogwarts.”

“True, but different cultures teach magic differently,” Padmé said. “I mean, there are schools the First Nations in the Americas and in Africa and India that teach students to become Animagi by age fourteen. They probably wouldn’t bat an eye at us casting a Patronus.”

“A very good point, indeed.” Qui-Gon admitted.

“I still haven’t gotten my Patronus,” Sola grumbled.

“Try like Anakin said. Don’t worry about the negative emotions that may come up. Just focus on the joy and love, and the people or things you want to protect the most.”

Sola tried, but kept becoming frustrated at only producing a small flying shape. Finally Barriss whispered something to her. Sola blushed and tried again. A small falcon appeared, and Barriss squealed with delight. “I don’t even know what kind of bird that is,” she said.

“I believe it’s an American Kestrel. The smallest falcon in the world.” Qui-Gon said. “You’ve all done amazingly well. I would suggest you continue practicing until you can cast it without needing long minutes to focus your thoughts. If a dementor is nearby, you will not have that time.” They nodded, vowing to come back next week and the next, until they could all cast it as easily as they could a levitation spell.

Everyone went their separate ways, except Anakin and Obi-Wan who wanted to stop by the kitchens before curfew. Upon entering they were greeted by the House Elves who brought them more blackberry pie than they could ever hope to eat, with ice cream and sprinkles. Anakin thanked them profusely, trying to remember individual names.
“So,” said Obi-Wan. “Barriss and Sola huh?”

Anakin smiled. “Yeah, they seem to be a bit taken with each other. It’s sweet though.”

“It really doesn’t bother you?” The Hufflepuff asked before pushing a bite of pie into his mouth.

“No, we are just friends. And if she wants to let other people know that she and Sola are together, I will happily step down as her beard.”

Obi-Wan laughed. “So two girls dating doesn’t bother you?”

“Why would it?” Anakin asked, trying to remain neutral. “I mean I don’t know about here, but in the Muggle world two men or two women can get married and adopt kids if they want to.”

“Wizards and witches can do it here too, there’s just...more pressure.” He looked down at the table.

“Yeah, Barriss told me. People who are very into bloodlines being continued. Seems a bit ridiculous to me. If Muggles have in vitro and all kinds of other things, surely there are magical ways of conceiving a child. And even if there weren’t, who cares? Squibs can come from pureblood families and magical kids can come from Muggles. Why isn’t two people loving each other good enough?” He hadn’t meant to go on, but it made him angry that he might want to hold someone’s hand in the hallway and someone else would try and hex him for it.

Obi-Wan smiled strangely at that. “You really think it’s alright to want to be with someone even if you’re the same gender?”

“Of course. Don’t you?”

“Yeah, I do. I just...you never how someone else might feel about it.”

Well, at least Anakin wouldn’t have to worry about Obi-Wan disowning him.

Obi-Wan continued. “I mean I like Satine a lot, but she said it was unnatural, and that’s insane.”

As though Anakin needed another reason to dislike the girl. Well, if it might get his friend away from the prissy homophobe…

“Obi-Wan, I want to be honest with you. Because you’re one of my best friends. And I’m asking you to please not tell anyone else about this.” Obi-Wan nodded seriously and Anakin screwed up his courage. “I’m gay. I’ve known since early second year. Maybe even before that but I didn’t want to admit it to myself. Padmé knows because she’s Padmé and she knows everything, and Barriss because of our arrangement, but please don’t tell Ahsoka or anyone else. Let me tell people when I’m ready.”

Obi-Wan looked shocked. He blinked several times. Then schooled his features. “I mean I guess it makes sense. And of course I won’t tell anyone. And you’re my best friend too, no matter what.”

Anakin smiled. Before they parted ways they hugged in front of the kitchens again, and Anakin headed off to the dungeons happily.

Chapter End Notes
Yay, another chapter. Please leave comments as they give me energy.
That weekend Anakin got to explore Hogsmeade. After the protest, of course. He was surprised at how many students and town folk joined in to protest Dementors at Hogwarts. They made the front page of the Prophet, with Padmé giving an excellent statement to the press and Ahsoka recounting how if it hadn’t been for her friends, she’d have faced a Dementor’s kiss.

Afterwards he’d actually gotten to explore Hogsmeade. Obi-Wan mumbled something about meeting Sabine for tea so Anakin, Ahsoka, Barriss, and Sola had headed to the Three Broomsticks. Padmé was still talking to members of the press off the record.

Anakin had never had butterbeer but it was delicious. Then they’d ventured into the shops, Barriss purchasing some clothing and Anakin stocking up on chocolate. He’d also found a book about Animagi traditions across the world with instructions on how to become one that he’d hastily bought. They’d seen the Shrieking Shack and a few other places of interest. He thought Diagon Alley was more exciting but Hogsmeade was quaint.

Making his way back to the castle, having left Ahsoka to catch up with her dorm mates Sola and Barriss to lunch by themselves, he heard Obi-Wan calling after him, running to catch up.

“Not with Satine?” Anakin tried hard to keep the venom out of his voice and was proud of himself for succeeding.

“I um, I ended things with her. She just...it was too much for something that should have been fun.”

Anakin would do a victory lap around the Quidditch Pitch later.

“Sorry,” he replied.

“Yeah, but there’s always someone else out there,” Obi-Wan sighed.


“Are you really thinking about trying it?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Maybe. I mean, I wanted to talk to Qui-Gon first. It’s good we’re learning the Patronus Charm, but what if we need to get away without being recognized? What if it ends up being a brilliant way to sneak around the castle?” He grinned at that last bit.

“It’s a potentially very dangerous undertaking, though. Wizards have ended up in St. Mungo’s for months because the didn’t do it properly.”

“Which is why we’ll be careful. If the four of us worked on this, I know we could do it. You and Padmé are brilliant at Charms and Herbology. Ahsoka and I are the best at Transfigurations and Potions. Besides, Dooku is still next in line to be Minister if anything happens to Valorum. There’s a still a Dark Lord out there somewhere, and two murderers who escaped from Azkaban. We can’t know enough about how to evade or defend ourselves, really.”

“Those are good points. Though Animagi have to register with Ministry. If we didn’t we could be in
serious trouble. But yes, if it’s something we think we can do safely, then I say we do it.” Anakin
beamed. He knew Ahsoka would be on board as well. He just had to talk to Padmé.

A few days later he found her in a secluded corner of the library. “You want me to take time out
during my O.W.L. year to figure out how to turn into an animal with you?” She fixed him with a
pointed stare.

“We both know you studied all summer. Probably since before then. It’s another weapon in our
arsenal. Not just against Dementors but against Dooku, what he did to us and Sola, and the
psychopaths who escaped from Azkaban,” he whispered. “Plus I bet ‘Patronus at fifteen’ looks good
on a transcript.” He tried to hit the points that would affect her the most. He succeeded, apparently.

“Fine,” she whispered back. “But not if it interferes with my O.W.L. work.”

Qui-Gon had a different view on things.

“Anakin,” he said, pacing the floor of his classroom after classes were done for the day. “It’s a
dangerous undertaking. The Patronus Charm is one thing, but this requires an amount of preparation
much larger than anything you’ve done before.”

“But that doesn’t mean I couldn't do it,” Anakin said. “In theory of course. Just that I should be
patient and go through the process slowly.”

Qui-Gon sighed. “It’s not forbidden to learn, but if I were to teach you, I would have ensure your
registration with Ministry.” He said this very carefully. Anakin considered it. That would mean
Dooku would know. No, out of the question. “I can answer any questions you might have about the
theory of the Animagus process as it’s part of your curriculum, but I will not guide you or encourage
you or any student to attempt it. You are far too young and I need you to promise me you'll stick
with theory and meditation only.” Anakin nodded, grateful for Qui-Gon’s not so-honest honesty
about the Ministry not needed to know. He already felt bad for the promise he'd break, but if it could
help him survive another attack by the Dark Lord, he had to try.

Later, the four of them were all gathered in an abandoned classroom once again.

“So we're pretty much on our own here. But we can ask Qui-Gon about some theoretical aspects as
long as we don't make him suspicious. We just have to find a safe place to brew the potion and make
sure no one else finds out.” Anakin said.

“I may know a place,” Padmé said. “I’ll get back to you on it. Should we invite Barriss and Sola?”

“I think keeping this as small as possible is a good idea,” said Obi-Wan. “Plus we don’t know what
we’re doing, so better to only get ourselves hurt instead of risk them. We can always teach them after
we learn.”

Ahsoka and Anakin agreed.

“Fine, I’ll double check about the room. Between now and this time two weeks from now, everyone
needs to read everything they can get their hands on about becoming an Animagi. Textbooks,
Anakin’s books, library, everything. I’ll signal in two weeks’ time when I’ve secured a place.”

They all nodded and left the classroom.
The next morning the mail arrived as usual. Unfortunately many students were once again gasping. Apparently two half-bloods, a married couple, had been murdered not far from Hogsmeade. The Dark Mark, the symbol that the Dark Lord who called himself Sidious used, had been spotted over the couple’s’ home.

Anakin saw red. Two innocent people, just like his mother, just like Obi-Wan’s parents, had been slaughtered.

“It was him,” Obi-Wan whispered. “Paal. I know it.”

Anakin sent comfort to his through their bond.

“These pureblood racists are a cancer on the magical world,” Anakin grit out. Obi-Wan wrapped an arm around Anakin as well.

“Come on,” said Barriss. “We’ll all be late.”

Padmé was missing at lunch but at dinner she showed up with two new bracelets. A green, grey and dark blue one for Barriss, and a bronze, blue and green one for Sola. Each bracelet also had a multicolor thread of red and yellow through it. At their confused looks she explained. “These bracelets let us communicate simple thoughts and feelings with each other. When I saw the murders this morning, well, you guys are family too. If you’re in trouble or need us, just run your finger along it and think ‘danger’ or whatever you need to communicate. We’ll all feel it and we’ll know who it’s from.” Anakin thought that Barriss was trying very hard not to look choked up. “We can’t be too careful. Something tells me things are only going to get worse.”

The six of them spent Thursdays meditating and practicing their Patronus Charms with Qui-Gon. The second Quidditch Match of the year passed, and Slytherin beat Gryffindor easily. Barriss was wicked fast and Chen and Vos were unstoppable as Beaters.

September melded into October, and all six could perform their Patronus Charms “as capably as Aurors” according to Qui-Gon. Padmé had indeed found them a safe spot for Animagi work. The Room of Requirement was known to exist in Hogwarts, but few had ever found it. However Padmé had been prone to pacing quiet spots of the castle when she was a nervous First Year, and had indeed found it. They had set the room up with extra cauldrons and ingredients from Hogsmeade just in case. Anakin told Padmé that if he weren’t gay, he might have considered proposing. Ahsoka had cried that she “knew it!” and immediately asked him if she could set him up with someone.

Soon it was nearing Halloween. Anakin was in Herbology with the Gryffindors, trying to find a way to sneak off towards the mandrakes. Along with meditation, the first phase of becoming an Animagi involved keeping a mandrake leaf in one’s mouth for a full month, from full moon to full moon. And tonight was a full moon. He mouthed “distraction” to Ahsoka who proceeded to ask Professor Billaba completely ridiculous questions about the structures on her Bubotuber.

Anakin hurried back towards the mandrakes and snagged four small leaves, not even disturbing the plants. He made it back with no one being any the wiser.

After dinner he handed the leaves out. “Remember, we have to keep these in our mouths, no charms, for a full month. Don’t swallow it when you eat or you have to start over.”

“So no tonsil hockey either. Good to know.” Ahsoka said, making Anakin blush faintly.

They also each had to chant Amato Animo Animato Animagus once per day while they had the
leaves in their mouth. At the end of the month they would each make a potion and the leaf would be an essential ingredient.

As they left the empty classroom, further down the corridor they passed Satine and one of her friends. Both girls stuck their noses in the air extra high as they passed Obi-Wan.

“How can their noses be up so high when their heads are so far up their asses?” Anakin wandered loudly, causing the girls to glare and Anakin to laugh.

“You didn’t have to do that,” Obi-Wan said, though he was grinning.

“Yes he did,” said Padmé. "Satine made a comment today to Barriss about her ‘unseemly’ relationship with Sola. Satine is lucky Anakin said something instead of me.”

“Ugh. Don’t know what I was thinking there,” Obi-Wan muttered. Anakin and Padmé discreetly low-fived.

The Halloween Feast came and went, and learning to eat with a leaf in one’s mouth wasn’t as difficult as he’d thought it might be. He just had to be careful to tuck it into his gums and away from his teeth.

Slytherin beat Ravenclaw soundly the weekend after Halloween, and Obi-Wan had bear-hugged him on the field. Really, one day he wouldn’t have butterflies in his stomach because of the boy.

The week after that another half-blood was found dead, the body left in the middle of Hogsmeade. A young woman who had just opened her own shop in the small village. Hogsmeade weekends were ended for the year.

A week after that it was time to brew their potions. The potions had to be brewed under the full moon. They snuck out of their respective dorms and made it to the Room of Requirement easily. Settling in front of four separate cauldrons, they brewed the potion they’d learned by heart. Anakin stopped Obi-Wan from adding the asphodel to quickly, and Obi-Wan made sure that Anakin and Ahsoka had harvested the crucial plant ingredients earlier that week. Padmé was a genius so she was likely safe.

They’d been brewing for two hours, and the lunar calendar Ahsoka had brought was showing the strongest phase of the full moon to be almost done.

“Now!” said Padmé, and they dropped their mandrake leaves in, stirring in widdershins carefully. Each cauldron seemed to have a different color and odor, but they’d read that it was to be expected. The potion didn’t make much, but the potential Animagus had to drink all of it.

“Bottoms up,” Anakin said, not wanting to waste the moonlight streaming in from the windows.

He used a ladle to drink all that he could, scraping the sides and bottom for good measure. It wasn’t the worst potion he’d ever ingested taste-wise. It was earthy, with a kind of spice to it. He could taste clear skies and fresh wood, smell the tops of pine forests and open fields.

After everyone had finished their potions, Ahsoka said the hard part was still to come. The potion had been difficult to brew, but not impossible. The mandrake a challenge but hardly taxing. Actually attaining their forms would be the hard part. The part that made most Witches and Wizards just give up. Qui-Gon said that knowing their Patronus forms could help, but it wouldn’t mean that the forms would be the same by any stretch. After all, a Patronus could change during a person’s lifetime, but
an Animagi form could not. They cleaned their cauldrons out in silence, readying themselves for the meditation and work that would come in the following weeks.

Between Quidditch schedules, Padmé studying for O.W.L.S., meditation with Qui-Gon, and actual classes, working on their Animagi forms was hard to find time for. They decided that late Monday nights after curfew would have to do. Barriss and Sola wouldn’t suspect them then, and no one else would be looking for them either.

It was a late night in November and they were all trying to focus very hard on their forms. So far Padmé was having the most success. She had managed to sprout a beak and some feathers around her underarms, but was stuck. Anakin told her stories about he and Obi-Wan had nearly been caught by Windu trying to turn his robes a nice purple color before she calmed down enough and was all-human Padmé again. Still, she was encouraged by her initial success.

Ahsoka’s form also seemed to align closely with her Patronus. She had fur and what looked to be the startings of a tail. Obi-Wan sprouted a fuzzy looking tail but nothing else. Anakin was at a complete loss. Maybe his Animagus form was nothing like his Patronus. After nearly three hours they called it a night.

Anakin was bleary eyed in Divinations the next morning. Luckily all they had to do was start a natal star chart for themselves. He knew his birthday was July 31st but had no idea what time of day he’d been born. After examining him very closely, Professor Kolar said he’d been born at ten in the morning, and adjusted his chart accordingly. Anakin was glad the classroom was dark so no one noticed his blush.

At lunch he was proven wrong. “Oh my god, you guys should have seen how hard Anakin blushed over Professor Kolar!” Barriss cackled. Anakin told her to keep it down. “What? It’s so cute. And he is easy on the eyes. That hair and the crystal in his ear? You could totally picture a guy like that wearing motorcycle jacket.” Anakin debated the merits of being Barriss’ friend. He filed the mental image away for later.

“I mean objectively he’s not bad looking,” Obi-Wan said, looking intently at his food. Anakin would not let himself hope at that. His friend was straight and just being nice.

“Anakin, you gotta let me set you up. I know someone who’s our year, into you, definitely a boy, and a nice one at that.”

Anakin was a bit curious at that. “Who?” He asked.

“Nuh-uh. Not unless you agree first. It’s just one date. Have tea up on the astronomy tower, cast a warming charm around each other, see how it goes.” She had a smile, one he didn’t trust. Sometimes he wondered if she should be in Slytherin and he should be in Gryffindor. “I’ll get back to you.” He said. Despite his lack of commitment she squealed like it was a done deal.

He headed off towards Transfigurations with Barriss, wondering who Ahsoka could know.

They were working on inter-species transformations, and Anakin easily turned his mouse into a frog and back again several times. Then he helped other students. Cody seemed to be having a bit of difficulty. “Here,” Anakin said. “Don’t try and force it to be something it’s not. Imagine that it wants to turn into a frog. It’s lived it’s whole rodent life, wishing to be an amphibian.” Cody tried again and had much better results.

“You’re really brilliant at this,” he smiled at Anakin. Anakin felt butterflies set off in his stomach a
Another Monday night, another long session of trying to change his body. Padmé had sharp yellow eyes, a beak, and arms full of feathers. She looked a statue of the goddess Isis the way she was kneeling. They had a good system going though. If they got stuck, one of them would talk with that person until they calmed down enough to revert to human and try again. He couldn’t imagine doing this alone. It must be how people ended up in St. Mungo’s.

Ahsoka’s spine had shifted, putting her on four legs. It looked painful but she assured everyone it wasn’t. Her nose had broadened as well. Anakin didn’t think the dark fur was a reflection of her skin tone. “Ahsoka, I think you may be a panther. Or a black cat.” Anakin suggested helpfully. Ahsoka closed her eyes, picturing a black feline to try and finish her transformation. And there it was. Ahsoka was gone and a large black panther was in her place. It had a cascade of white dots in the right side of its neck, where Ahsoka’s beads would hang.

“Yes! You’re a panther!” Anakin exclaimed. He walked towards her, and Ahsoka head butted him gently. Even Padmé was ecstatic.

“You’re beautiful! I mean you’re a beautiful human too, but wow, Ahsoka!”

“Absolutely brilliant!” Obi-Wan agreed.

Ahsoka ran around the room, testing out her powerful new legs, smelling everything as though seeing it for the first time.

“Can you turn back?” Anakin asked. Ahsoka tilted her head and closed her eyes, and once again their human friend stood in front of them.

“That was amazing!” She shouted. “I’ve never felt so powerful! You all need to catch up! We have GOT to run around the grounds.”

Padmé took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She visualized the eagle she could summon as a Patronus. The symbol of her House and the little finely carved gift that Palo had given her, his dark eyes she as he’d handed her the oddly-wrapped piece.

When she opened her eyes, her vision had changed dramatically. She could see every detail but not in colors she could describe. “You’re an eagle!” Obi-Wan said happily. “A Golden Eagle by the looks of it.” She spread her wings experimentally. She had a brief moment of panic where she realized she didn’t know how to fly. But it was replaced by a sense of “of course you can fly, you’re an eagle for god’s sake.” She lifted off. Without air currents it was difficult, but she circled the room, landing the floor and returning to her human shape.

“I really did it?” She asked. “I was an eagle?”

“Yes, you were really an eagle. And you had a stripe down your beak. I think from how you like to do your lipstick for fancy occasions.” Anakin said, smiling.

“Now you two have to help us,” Obi-Wan said.

“I don’t think your forms are at all like your Patronus forms,” Padmé said. “I think you’ll have to
“think differently.”

“Well we know Obi-Wan is fuzzy and has four legs,” Anakin said. “But nothing about me.”

“Try different classifications of animals until you find something that feels right or gets results,” Ahsoka suggested.

“Wanna explore the grounds?” Padmé asked Ahsoka mischievously.

“Oh you’re on!” Ahsoka said.

Padmé turned to the boys. “You two should help each other. Only one of you try changing at a time. Don’t wait up!”

The two girls were out towards the nearest exit.


“If I’m not a badger, then what am I?”

“Hm, fur, four legs. That tail didn’t look feline. Try for something canine maybe?”

Obi-Wan nodded and closed his eyes.

This time he got an entire tail out. He looked to be large, as well. Anakin had a hunch. “Think wolf!” Obi-Wan’s legs and tail thickened, his spine forced him down, two large and pointed ears rose on his head. And standing in front of Anakin, was a Eurasian wolf. One with an auburn strip curled around it’s right ear.

“Look at you! You’re magnificent! You’re a massive wolf!” Obi-Wan put his paws on Anakin’s shoulder and yipped happily, sniffing his friend. When he’d turned back Anakin suggested that Obi-Wan go run the grounds with the others.

“No, you waited for me and I’m waiting for you,” he said, pushing his hair out of his right eye. “How’d you figure wolf anyhow?”

“It’s who you are,” Anakin said, smiling. “You’re loyal, but you’re also brave, and we’re like your pack or something. It just made sense all of a sudden.” Obi-Wan hugged him tightly.

“We still have to figure out what you are,” he told his friend.

“I think it will have to wait for next week,” Anakin yawned. If I fall asleep in Kolar’s class one more time, I’ll have more detention than I know what to do with.”

“Can’t disappoint the teacher you fancy,” Obi-Wan joked. Anakin nudged him playfully.

The next day Padmé called for a meeting through their bracelets. They met in their usual abandoned classroom.

“I know how Acri and Paal escaped Azkaban,” she said. “They were unregistered Animagi.”

“And we know this how?” Barriss asked.

“Because I’m one, too.” Padmé said.
“What? When were you gonna tell me?” Sola asked.

“I just did. I mean, I only mastered my form last week. So I was...testing it out. Flying around the grounds.”

“You’re a bird?! That is so cool!” Sola interjected again.

Padmé smiled. “I thought so, too. But I was flying, and a Dementor passed right in front of me. I was terrified. But it acted like I wasn’t there. So I looped around it. And around another one. No reaction at all! Dementors can’t see Animagi!”

“What does this mean for us, though?” Barriss asked.

“It means that all of us need to get really good with the Revelio Charm. Any animal around you who you think maybe shouldn’t be there, cast it. Or better yet get away from it. But pay attention. If those Death Eaters plan on getting inside Hogwarts, it could very well be as animals. If an animal follows you, behaves strangely, get somewhere near a Professor and cast Revelio. Also let everyone else in the group know.” They nodded and left in ones and twos.

That night Anakin slept deeply. He dreamed of soaring high above the snowy castle grounds. He was happy, peaceful, until the screams started. They came from everywhere. There was smoke and fire and death, so much death. He woke panting.

November slid into December and Anakin couldn’t believe how fast the year was going by. He was already a bit too tall for his robes and had had to have Padmé show him how to let them out a bit.

He was meditating on his bed alone, curtains drawn, trying to think about what shape he could take. He remembered his dream from over a week ago. Not the fire and screaming parts but the flying bit. He hadn’t felt like he was on a broom. Perhaps he was supposed to be a bird. He focused on changing. The potion’s taste of clear skies and open fields and canopies. He felt smaller but didn’t open his eyes. He let the images come to him. Dark wings. He had feathers now, black he could tell. His feet turned to talons. He felt...finished.

He opened his eyes. The world was the same but different. Few colors but there was so much to see! He hopped down, trying to find the full length mirror they all shared. He found it and admired himself. He was a raven! A large one at that. He was perfectly black, even his eyes. Except for a white scar that bisected his right eye, just where his real scar was. He was a raven! He could fly! He beat his wings awkwardly. Ok, he needed wind and more practice, but he could fly! He couldn’t wait to tell Padmé and the others. He changed back and rushed down to dinner. He told Obi-Wan through their bond. His response was excited and warm.

When Anakin sat next to Ahsoka her first words were, “Ok, I have your date set up. You’re meeting him tomorrow night at the astronomy tower, just after dinner.”

Something odd flickered across his still-open bond with Obi-Wan before it closed.

“Fine,” Anakin said. “But I have even better news than that.”

Chapter End Notes
I hope you didn't feel like everyone was rushing through Patronus and Animagi stuff. I just wanted it to be established for later on.

Two chapters in a day. Whee! Comments, please.
Anakin Skywalker and the Rescue Mission

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anakin was incredibly nervous. He’d actually much rather be studying or practicing with his friends than headed up to the Astronomy Tower to meet god only knew who. He couldn’t think of anyone he wanted to have a date with. Well, aside from Obi-Wan who didn’t count because he was straight.

He cast a warming charm on himself as he ascended the stairs to the Astronomy Tower. At the top he glanced around. And was very surprised to see Cody, with two mugs of what looked like Butterbeer. Cody smiled shyly waved Anakin over.

“You?” Anakin asked. “I mean, not that I’m happy to see you, it’s just Ahsoka wouldn’t tell me who I was meeting.”

Cody smiled again. “Yeah, she was a bit hellbent on making this happen. Not that I had any objection, mind.” Anakin took a seat next to Cody, taking the offered blanket and mug of Butterbeer. They talked about Transfigurations, Quidditch, a bit about the attacks the previous year and Cody apologized again, which Anakin said wasn’t necessary. Cody talked about his dad, who loved him and Rex and didn’t mind at all that Cody preferred boys. Overall it was a lovely couple of hours. When it drew close to curfew and even the warming charms and Butterbeer weren’t holding off the December cold, they decided to call it a night.

As they stood to leave, Cody stood close to Anakin. He asked the other boy if he could kiss him. Anakin nervously said yes. It wasn’t fireworks or magic, but it was nice, if a bit awkward. They both smiled as they headed back down into the castle, hands gently holding. They parted ways when Anakin headed towards the Slytherin dorms with a small smile.

He laid in bed that night, but his thoughts soon darkened. Was Cody someone he could trust with his secrets? With him being an Animagi and the chaos that seemed to follow him every year no matter where he went? How would Cody react if he knew that Anakin really was the Heir of Slytherin? Only last year the other boy had been terrified of him. He supposed he could deal with all that when and if it became an issue. But still, his dreams were uneasy that night.

Breakfast the next morning was predictably unbearable. Ahsoka immediately asked him how it went, with Obi-Wan and Padmé were looking intently at him, Barriss and Sola having not come down yet.

“It was fine,” Anakin said. “Cody’s really nice.”

Ahsoka rolled her eyes. “Yeah but did you have fun? Oooh, did you kiss?”

Anakin turned a bright shade of red. He had to learn to control that.

“Oh my god you did!” She high fived Padmé.

Anakin groaned.

Just then Cody entered the Great Hall. He walked up to their table. “Hey, do you want to study for Transfiguration tonight? Maybe somewhere where we won’t get yelled at for talking? I know a place.” Cody smiled genuinely. Anakin agreed quickly, if only to get his friends to stop making
ridiculous kissy faces behind his back.

Once Cody left, he rounded on them. “You are all ridiculous and I don’t know why I consider you my friends.”

“I was very well behaved,” Obi-Wan said seriously.

“Except for Obi-Wan,” Anakin amended.

“I knew you two would like each other,” Ahsoka said smugly.

“I like him, but it’s not like I can tell him about all of this,” Anakin whispered and gestured to their table.

“You don’t have to marry him, Skyguy, you just needed some fun.”

“Oh, and where’s your fun?” Anakin retorted.

“A lady doesn’t kiss and tell,” Ahsoka said cryptically.

Anakin banged his head on the table again.

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Anakin was sitting in Divinations again. He was trying very hard not to doze off. But the candles and incense were overwhelming, and his stomach was very full from breakfast. He rested his eyes for a moment.

He was flying over Hogsmeade again. Except this time the fire and screaming were the central focus. He could see Madame Rosmerta being pulled out of her tavern by masked figures, others being tortured in the streets. A family with two small children being pulled out into the carnage.

But in front of them was Qui-Gon. Paal had him on his knees, wand to Qui-Gon’s head, binding him as a dementor swooped down. And then Qui-Gon was gone. Not physically gone but whatever made Qui-Gon Qui-Gon was gone, leave an empty husk behind.

Anakin woke sweating, wanting to scream. His scar ached painfully against his brown and cheek bone like it hadn’t since first year. Professor Kolar came over to him and asked him what what wrong. Anakin said he needed to speak with him privately.

In the Professor’s Office, he told the man about his vision. How he didn’t think it was a nightmare but a full on vision. Professor Kolar said he’d call for a meeting that night with Professor Windu and the Headmaster.

Anakin was glad that someone might take him seriously.

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That night after dinner, Anakin found himself in Yoda’s office with Professor Kolar and Windu, but also with Qui-Gon and Professor Tahl. At Professor Kolar’s urging he told the other Professors about his vision. About the Hogsmeade attack and how real it had felt.

The Headmaster said that there was nothing he could do aside from keep everyone in the castle over the holiday. Surprisingly, it was Professor Windu who suggested that he and any other interested Professors stay in the Hogsmeade during the time frame Anakin suspected the attack would happen. Anakin had said that judging by the moon’s phase in his vision, it would be the fifth day into Winter
Anakin told Qui-Gon he couldn’t go into Hogsmeade at all during break. Qui-Gon told him that not all visions came true, they were just possibilities if they were anything more than dreams at all. Qui-Gon also said he wouldn’t lie to him. He had business in the woods near Hogsmeade, but he’d do everything he could to avoid going into Hogsmeade itself. Anakin was at his wit’s end what could possibly be more important than not getting your soul sucked out by a Dementor!?

After leaving the office he called his friends with his bracelet. He told them about his vision and said he had an idea. They should talk to Professor Fisto first, though. He could have the thestrals ready to evacuate people from Hogsmeade with the school carriages. Ahsoka agreed, volunteering to talk to the man as they had a good rapport.

He then suggested they get involved themselves. Obi-Wan wholeheartedly agreed if Qui-Gon’s safety was on the line. Ahsoka voiced a similar opinion. Padmé and Barriss dissented. “You both promised him you wouldn’t go looking for murderers,” Padmé reminded them.

“We’re not looking for murderers,” Obi-Wan said. “We’re trying to keep Qui-Gon safe. He’s the only family I have.”

“And we can do it at a distance!” Anakin exclaimed. “I could fly overhead. No one would see me.”

“Yeah, you’d be real inconspicuous on a broom,” Barriss said.

“Um, actually…” He began.

“Oh my god! You’re all Animagi aren’t you!” She accused. “I knew Padmé wouldn’t have gone off and done it herself! How the hell did all four of you do it?”

“Well, meditating with Qui-Gon since First Year helped a ton,” Anakin said shyly. “The potion wasn’t even that hard. And we all worked together. Helped each other meditate, consider our forms, talked each other down when we got stuck.”

“Skywalker, you’re one of my best friends but if you ever do something that reckless without me again, I will skin you alive, understood?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Anakin said seriously.

Padmé suggested that she and Anakin perform aerial cover that night, under the circumstances that no one interfered in Hogsmeade or got near it at all. Obi-Wan and Ahsoka would wait on the outskirts of the village. Padmé said her parents wouldn’t mind her staying this year for the holidays since it was for O.W.L.S., and Ahsoka wouldn’t have a problem staying, either. They decided not to tell any Professors that they’d be out in Hogsmeade that night.

Instead of Animagi practice, they practiced healing spells, staying up late most nights to make sure they knew the basics of field medicine. They even bottled several healing potions to keep in their robes just in case. There was a limit to what one could keep on their person in their Animagi form and they found their limits. Winter Break was nearing, and they would have to be ready. Padmé stressed that under current circumstances none of them should try to help with Hogsmeade. Windu, Kolar, and whatever Aurors he could muster would have to do.

Ahsoka approached Professor Fisto after class and after consulting with Windu, he agreed to have as many thestral carriages as possible ready. Barriss and Sola would help guide them on broomsticks. The professors didn’t know this, but they’d figure it out eventually, Sola figured.
As Hogwarts students left on the train home, Anakin hugged Cody goodbye, pretending that he absolutely wasn’t going to go get involved with something dangerous.

When he came back to the Great Hall it was nearly empty. He took a seat next to Obi-Wan. “Do you really like him?” The older boy asked.

“I mean he’s nice. He fun to talk to but I don’t know. I don’t know if I’ll ever really be able to be myself around him.” Anakin admitted. “I mean I keep so much from him. And it’s not like he’s incapable. He’s a good dueler, great with Charms, but I don’t know if I could ever trust him with everything. Not the way I trust you and Ahsoka and Padmé. And even Barriss and Sola.”

“That kind of trust is important to you?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Well, yeah. But I’m not exactly going to find someone who really knows me and still likes me like that,” he laughed without humor. “At least not here. But we’ll graduate and who knows what’s out there in world. Until then, I’m happy enough.” Anakin shrugged, pretending to go over a chapter in his potions book.

It was three days into break and Anakin couldn’t sleep. He walked down to the kitchens for something to eat, maybe learn some more names of the House Elves. He was talking to Winky about the hours House Elves worked when the door slid open.

“Can’t sleep either?” Anakin asked Obi-Wan as the boy sat down opposite him.

“Nah. Whatever Qui-Gon’s doing out near Hogsmeade, he refuses to stay at Hogwarts that night. Said it was very important negotiation work.”

“Negotiations with whom?” Anakin queried.

“No idea. Said it was on a need-to-know basis. So I suppose we’re doing this.”

“Wouldn’t be a year without mortal peril,” Anakin half-joked.

Obi-Wan snorted. “So what are you getting Cody for Christmas?”

“Ha. With all this going on I haven’t even thought about it. I don’t even know if he’s my boyfriend. Dating is confusing. Is there a school for magical monks I could transfer to?”

Obi-Wan laughed. “Let me know if you find it.”

“I don’t even know how he feels about you know...being out. What if he doesn’t want anyone to know?” He thunked his head against the table. “I should just get a bunch of cats and snakes and be the crazy old man at the end of the street.”

“Don’t talk about yourself that way. If he doesn’t want to hold your hand in public or whatever, then he’s an idiot. And we’ll hex his hair to turn rainbow colors.”

Anakin grinned. “You’re the best.” As they dug into chocolate cake, nothing else was discussed.

The day of the attack arrived. The morning crisp and clear. Professor Windu said he and a handful of
Aurors would be in plain clothes, conducting mundane business in the village. Qui-Gon had already left for wherever he left to, and Professors Fisto and Kolar were ready with thestrals and carriages.

Since the six of them couldn’t exactly head out through the main entrance, Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka would pretend to be running Quidditch drills, while Padmé would pretend to help Sola and Barriss with an Herbology project. They’d meet at dusk just inside the forbidden forest.

Anakin was tense all day. They all were, honestly. They pretended to study, picked at food, took a walk around the lake.

Then Anakin, Ahsoka, and Obi-Wan headed to the Quidditch pitch. Padmé told Professor Gallia that she was going to help Barriss and Sola with a project on crepuscular-blooming plants.

When it was properly dark and they had all made it to the rendezvous spot. Anakin handed two school brooms to Barriss and Sola. They made off towards the carriages silently, careful to not be seen. Anakin nodded to the group, then turned into a raven. Obi-Wan crouched to get a good look at him. “Wow, amazing!” He said. Anakin was glad that birds didn’t blush. Padmé transformed next, and the two of them took off above their four-legged friends, careful to keep inside the woods and unseen.

Anakin had a moment of deja vu. The sky was so clear, the snow picturesque on the village below. Perhaps it had been a dream after all, and there was no attack coming. Seconds later he was proven wrong. There was a loud blast behind the Three Broomsticks. More explosions. He felt Obi-Wan’s fear. Someone was already lying dead outside the pub. People in masks were pulling Rosmerta out. He flew as low as he dared. “Well look what we have here!” The voice was unhinged. Familiar but not quite. It was Ajunta Paal, and he had Qui-Gon. The Death Eater’s face was haggard, having the appearance of poorly dried brown leather. His eyes promised suffering though. He had two wands, one in each hand. The other must be Qui-Gon. “A Hogwarts Professor, so far out from school. Say, aren’t you the one who inherited the brat whose parents I killed? Those Kenobi blood traitors?”

Anakin tried to send feelings of caution to Obi-Wan, who was still concealed in the forest with Ahsoka.

Another voice cried out, a female one. “And he wasn’t alone!” Kreia Acri violently pushed Professor Tahl into the same area as Qui-Gon. Acri looked even older than Paal. Her grey hair overgrown and her fingernails looked like talons. She looked like the depiction of a witch from a Muggle children’s book. “Crucio!” the witch cried at the same time Qui-Gon yelled “No!”

Professor Tahl shook from the force of the curse, slumping when it ended.

“We should make an example of these two,” Paal said. “Remind people of what happens to blood traitors and mudbloods.”

Shit. Windu was busy trying to fight off Rosmerta’s attackers. Other Aurors were about but they too were busy trying to put out fires and get people onto carriages. In this little corner near the woods, no one would know before it was too late. Everything seemed to go in slow motion for a moment. Kreia shifted her stance and was about to raise her wand to Professor Tahl again. ‘I’m going to stop her.’ He sent to Obi-Wan as he angled himself into a dive. Theoretically this would work just like being on a broom. In the flickering shadows no one saw his dark form until it was too late. He stretched his talons out towards Kreia’s face and squeezed as hard as he could. He felt a sickening ‘pop’ under his sharp talons. The witch screamed. He landed and flew away, narrowly dodging a curse from Paal.
“I’m blind!” The witch was screaming. Professor Tahl had found her wand and had stupefyed the old crone.

Qui-Gon seemed fine, Obi-Wan and Ahsoka human now and hurling curses from the woods at Paal. Tahl was holding her head, the side of it bleeding heavily. Anakin landed next to Obi-Wan and Ahsoka, assuming his his human form, and Padmé soon joined them.

Paal still had the upper hand on Qui-Gon but he was losing it. Qui-Gon had his wand back and the Death Eater wasn’t expecting a fair fight, much less a fair fight plus help from unknown wizards in the woods. Then they felt it. Dementors swirling around them. At least two, likely three.

Professor Tahl tried to get of a Patronus but she was losing too much blood. Ahsoka ran towards her and began patching her up, ignoring the woman’s questions about what she was doing there. Sensing weakness, one of the dementors moved towards Ahsoka and Professor Tahl. Ahsoka cast a brilliant Patronus, but it only temporarily distracted the monster.

“On the count of three,” Padmé commanded, leveling her wand. Four Patroni launched at the dementor, rending it nearly to shreds, before turning on the others, causing all of the remaining abominations to flee. Obi-Wan and Padmé saw to Qui-Gon’s injuries, one of them quite deep, and Padmé set off sparks for a thestral chariot. They loaded the Professors as well as Ahsoka and Obi-Wan onto it. As it took off for the castle, Qui-Gon said that they were all going to have a very long talk about boundaries. Obi-Wan agreed, saying they’d start with where not to be when someone had a vision of an attack.

Anakin and Padmé did surveillance of Hogsmeade, seeing most of the fire put out and the Death Eaters gone. Anakin communicated this to Obi-Wan. Once at the castle entrance and able to check that everyone was safe through their bracelets, Anakin took a deep breath.

“We did it.” He smiled to Padmé softly.

“We did. I suppose we had better get to the Headmaster’s office before we’re summoned.”

“We save people and this is the thanks we get,” Anakin huffed. Padmé laughed and they headed for the Headmaster’s Office.

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Inside the office was another story. With all six of them there, plus Professors Jinn, Tahl, Fisto, Windu, and Kolar, it was cramped. And there was a lot of yelling.

“I specifically told you to stay on school grounds!” Windu was saying.

“As did I,” Qui-Gon added.

“But we knew it wouldn’t be enough!” Anakin said. “It never is! It’s never enough to stop students from being petrified or Dark Lords from being on the payroll! I knew that Qui-Gon was going to be in life threatening danger and no one was even in the area where I said he’d be!”

“You can’t expect me to sit by and lose another father!” Obi-Wan never raised his voice to Professors. “None of you would do that, and to expect us to let our families die, to not protect the school we swore to, it’s ridiculous!”

“Quiet!” The Headmaster said, tapping his small, gnarled staff.

“These students acted bravely. They stayed hidden until they no longer could, in good conscience.
It’s not their fault that the Ministry believes Dooku’s lies that Anakin is a child seeking attention. We almost lost two Professors tonight. We almost lost family of our own. Tonight has shown us that the Dark Lord’s reign is not nearly over. We must be vigilant. Paal and Acri were not the only assailants, only the ones the Aurors apprehended. Let us sleep, treat our wounds, and reassess tomorrow with clear eyes.”

Everyone cleared out of the Headmaster’s office. Anakin and Obi-Wan were the only ones walking down into the castle, where their dorms were. Obi-Wan turned suddenly and hugged Anakin tightly.

“What was that for?” They Slytherin boy asked, confused.

“For saving Qui-Gon. If it weren’t for you, well, thank you.” The Obi-Wan kissed his temple and made for the Hufflepuff dorm.

Anakin had never been so confused in his life.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, please!
The Dark Lord was displeased. Paal and Acri should have been able to kill at least a dozen people in Hogsmeade. Instead they had been caught and the rest of the idiots he called followers had been too scared to cause any real damage. Fewer than five people were killed. Jinn, the coward, should have been dead. His intelligence had told him he’d be near the village that night and he had. Perhaps Azkaban had made them soft. No matter. They’d soon be facing Dementors for the last time.

A follower, Krell, he thought, brought him a goblet of unicorn blood. The boy was new, barely out of school. But he’d done well so far. Viszla also had his uses. The idea that the Skywalker boy might share his father’s gift for premonitions was unsettling, but then again, it could be used against him. He would have to wait, do it perfectly this time. But he was certain he could pull the boy into a trap. He needed a showing of the true number of his troops. Something that would strike fear into the hearts of any who would stand against him.

The next morning at breakfast Anakin read the papers with Obi-Wan and their friends. Only four dead in Hogsmeade. Too many, but still, fewer than it would have been. Paal and Acri were expected to be given the Dementor’s kiss soon. Anakin was glad they’d be gone, but not sure if anyone deserved to have their soul destroyed.

Barriss and Sola looked exhausted. They’d spent most of the night getting frightened people on to carriages and even going into homes to get them out just in case. Luckily, today Aurors and a few Professors were getting everyone settled back into Hogsmeade. Professor Tahl was sitting with Qui-Gon at the head table, a bandage above her left eye. They were holding hands slightly which made Anakin smile. An owl dropped a note on the table, telling the four of them to meet with Professor Jinn.

After breakfast Anakin, Obi-Wan, Padmé, and Ahsoka were called into Qui-Gon’s private room. When they got there Professor Tahl was also waiting for them.

Qui-Gon began with no preamble. “What you all did was reckless and foolish, but also very brave. You had a plan, at least of sorts. And you saved my life and that of Avara’s.” He gestured to Professor Tahl. “And for that I am very thankful.”

“As am I,” Professor Tahl said. “Kreia Acri would have done much worse than torture me. However, who distracted her remains a mystery to me.”

There was a lot of awkward shuffling.

Qui-Gon started in again. “I know that in theory you all were interested in Animagus transformations. After all, it’s a complex theory that fascinates many. However to try it, unsupervised, would be a dangerous feat. One that takes even highly trained Wizards years to complete. For a group of underage wizards to do so would be unprecedented.”

“Well, not necessarily,” Padmé added. “We discussed before how in other cultures it’s not uncommon for fourteen year olds to achieve the transformation.”

“Yes, when their education focuses largely on the subject alone.” Qui-Gon countered.
“We didn't resort to that,” Ahsoka chimed in. “It wasn't hard to get brooms and sneak out. Being where you're not supposed to be is basically the most popular sport in school. We studied more than we had to about the Animagi process, but there's a lot to it. The potion takes weeks and that's one of the easier parts compared to the meditation. In theory, of course.”

“So all of you used school brooms to get to and from Hogsmeade?,” Professor Tahl said a bit disbelievingly.

Anakin nodded. "Barriss and Sola used theirs to help guide the carriages and get people out. We did aerial cover because we knew Qui-Gon had gone to Hogsmeade anyway."

Professor Tahl rolled her eyes, even though she could hardly see out of them.

Qui-Gon made a sound of contemplation."Kreia Acri was blinded by a bird last night. So I can rest assured that none of you did anything as reckless as swooping down to blind an armed Death Eater?"

“Birds are smarter than people give them credit for.” Anakin said.

 Qui-Gon sighed. “You all took to the Patronus charm much more quickly than most Wizards do. While the Animagus transformation would be a stretch, it wouldn't surprise me. However as I only managed it when I was twenty-five and after two years of study, I'm going to let this slide. For now.”

Obi-Wan spoke up. “We want to know what business you had in the woods near Hogsmeade that had to be conducted even though we said you’d be in danger.” Three heads behind him nodded.

Qui-Gon sighed. “Avara and I have been working with the centaur camps. They only conduct meetings at certain stages of the moon. If we missed this one we would have had to wait another month. The Ministry has been trying to seize territory that has belonged to the centaurs for centuries, if not longer. Since Dooku has been cleared of any wrongdoing regarding last year’s attacks, we’ve been trying to prove that he’s behind the illegal land seizures.”

Professor Tahl broke the now somewhat awkward silence. "You were all very brave to stand up and do what you did. Foolish, perhaps, but brave. You protected each other and Hogwarts. And Hogsmeade, come to think of it. I have a feeling that things are not going to get better for the magical community here. If Paal and Acri were out in plain sight, along with masked Death Eaters, it very likely means that Palpatine is not gone, and may in fact be gaining strength.”

Padmé gasped while the others huddled closer together. “We will need every advantage. And while I do not want any of you putting yourselves at risk, you will need your advantages too. If not for fighting than fleeing.” Obi-Wan tried to protests but Qui-Gon leveled a look at him. “You and I may not be biologically related, Obi-Wan. But I very much consider you my son. If something were to happen to you I could not bear it.” Obi-Wan nodded, fighting back tears. “And all of you as well. I care a great deal about you and am proud to be your mentor. But do not put yourselves in danger. We will be more cautious from now on so that you will not need to protect us. Now, you all have better things to do during winter break. I suggest you make good use of your time.”

They silently walked to the abandoned classroom that was ‘theirs’. Ahsoka put up silencing charms just in case.

“What now?” she asked.

“Now, we rest.” Padmé answered. “If the Dark Lord really is trying to prove he’s back, then for the short term, we rest. We’re all barely standing on our feet. But we put a thorn in the side of whoever
orchestrated that attack, and they won’t be happy. Which in war, usually means they’ll regroup, then escalate. So we rest. Then we learn everything we can about Defense Against the Dark Arts. See if we can get Professor Windu or someone else to tutor us. Dueling Club is one thing, but there are rules in Dueling Club. There aren’t any when you’re facing someone who wants to kill or capture you. But for the rest of break I vote we rest. I have to study for O.W.L.S., all of you have homework. Christmas is coming up. Play Quidditch, chess, Exploding Snap, whatever. We’ll start using the Room of Requirement to really duel one night a week. But for now we need everyone to think we’re behaving and not plotting or preparing.”

“Padmé, you’re brilliant in a really scary way.” Anakin said admiringly.

Padmé grinned. “Thank you, I’ve worked very hard for that. Now, I need a nap and to study. I suggest you all do the same.”

"Wait, I have one more question," Anakin said. "I know we're powerful, but if it really did take Qui-Gon two YEARS to become an Animagus, why were we all able to do it in a few months?"

"I have a theory about that," Padme said. "I think it's us. When we're together, we have better results. When I was practicing my Patronus alone it took longer to summon, even though the thoughts behind it were the same. I've noticed other things too. How it was easier for Anakin to brew the potion when we were all in the same room even though he'd been anxious about it. And that potion could have gone wrong in about twenty different ways. I'm also a better dueler on club nights when you three are there. I'm not sure why yet, but I'm working on it.” Anakin would ponder that later as well.

As they left the room Ahsoka teased Anakin. “So what’s Cody getting for Christmas this year?”

Anakin blushed. “Nothing if you don’t leave me alone and let me think about it.”

Padmé caught Obi-Wan’s frown. ‘Boys,’ she thought. ‘Honestly’.

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Christmas rolled around and Anakin woke on Qui-Gon’s couch. The six of them, plus Qui-Gon and Professor Tahl (who insisted on being called Avara when school wasn’t in session) had stayed up late, decorating the tree and drinking hot chocolate. Qui-Gon had conjured bed rolls for all of them. The living room was cramped and full of snores and mumbled of half-asleep people. It was perfect.

As everyone finally woke up, Qui-Gon and Avara began making breakfast. Obi-Wan and Anakin insisted on helping. Eggs, toast, sausage, bacon, bread pudding, and fruit salad were made in massive quantities. Everyone ate in their pajamas seated on the living room floor.

Then the unwrapping of presents began. Padmé and Sola got massive amounts of gifts from their parents. Sola got a silver cauldron even though she hated potions, as well as new dress robes and surprisingly, a book titled “Cursebreaking for Beginners: Recognizing the Signs and Ending the Enchantment”. She said it must have been her mother’s doing and promised everyone a read through it. Padmé got a series of biographies of famous wizards and witches on the Wizengamot and an expensive set of earrings. She seemed unimpressed with both, but did love the book Obi-Wan and Anakin got her on the use of eagles as magical symbols and the necklace of a single wing that Sola and Ahsoka pitched in on.

Ahsoka and Anakin both received new sweaters from Ms. Tano. Ahsoka also unwrapped a set of earrings shaped like Snitches, that fluttered periodically, a rare text on advanced potions from Anakin, and a broom polishing kit from Padmé, Sola, and Barriss. Next was Obi-Wan’s turn. He
loved his new dragonhide Quidditch gloves from Qui-Gon, the ostentatious tie-dyed wolf shirt that Ahsoka had gotten him, and the guide to exotic magical plants from Padmé. When Anakin handed him his present he was a bit nervous. It was a strange shape and upon unwrapping it, Obi-Wan found a thick, brown leather cuff bracelet. In the center was a compass of sorts with small golden hands. On the inside of the cuff was stamped a small wolf’s head, along with a raven’s profile. “Padmé helped me find it,” Anakin stuttered. “And with the engravings on the back. And the Charms. If you ever need to know if any of us are safe, touch it while you’re wearing it and it will tell you.”

Obi-Wan secured it to his left wrist, above where a robe sleeve would cover it. He thought “Anakin” while touching it with his right fingertips. The word “safe” appeared briefly above the spinning hands. “I figure you’re the most loyal and protective, being Hufflepuff, so it’s like a step up from the bracelets Padmé made. I hope you like it.” Anakin was sure he would die of embarrassment.

“It’s perfect,” Obi-Wan said, bringing his friend in for a hug. “Thank you.”

Barriss received a book on the finer points of marriage contracts from her mother, and a new broom from her father. She promptly threw the book into the fireplace while she and Sola laughed, holding hands. She did appreciate the even larger plush snake that Anakin had got her this year. He’d even glued a beard onto its face.

Anakin unwrapped a beautiful new set of Potions tools from Qui-Gon, complete with knife blades inlaid with mother of pearl and a scale said to be the most accurate in the world. He got a book on Norse mythology from Padmé. Surprisingly it was a muggle author, but Padmé said the sections on ravens especially were remarkably well researched. He got a silver raven pendant from Ahsoka, with a note saying they were absolutely getting tattooed together when they were old enough. Barriss got him an oversized shirt that read in rainbow font, “Let’s Get One Thing Straight, I’m Not.” He had no idea where she could have possibly gotten it, but he loved it and vowed to keep it forever. Next was Obi-Wan’s gift. It was square, only about twelve inches by twelve inches. He tore the paper off carefully. There’s a beautiful painting of a raven in flight, both wings stretched out, a tree in the background. It was mostly black and white, with a few colors reflect off the bird’s under feathers like an oil spill. The bird looked proud, strong, protective. Beneath the image was painted in small letters, “The Knight of Night, When Power Takes Flight. When the Craven will Shake, and the Righteous will Wake.”

Obi-Wan stammered. “It’s an old poem I found about ravens. I know it’s not much—”

“This is incredible, Obi-Wan. I didn’t even know you could paint!”

“Yeah, I drew a lot when my parents first- when I went to live with Qui-Gon, because I wouldn’t talk. You really like it?”

“It’s beautiful!” He hugged Obi-Wan tightly. “You should draw and more. You’re brilliant at it.” Obi-Wan flushed happily.

If Qui-Gon had any questions about the amount of animal-themed gifts he kept them to himself.

“Looks like you have one more,” Ahsoka said, pointing under the tree. Anakin pulled it out. It was from Cody. At first he thought it was a book. But it turned out to be a leather bound diary. Inside was a note that read, “I know you meant to research your parents this year, and thought keeping a record of what you found might help.” Anakin smiled. It was a lovely gift. He just didn’t understand why he wasn’t over the moon about it.

Ahsoka seemed to be though. “Awww! You have the best boyfriend!” she crowed.
“I don’t even know if we’re boyfriends, Ahsoka. We’ve had two real dates.”

“Two very good dates and a super thoughtful gift. You’re boyfriends. What’d you get him?”

“Nothing too special. A chess set in Hufflepuff colors so that we’d have something to do together once he gets back.”

“I call dibs on being Maid of Honor!” Ahsoka crowed.

“Ahsoka, seriously, you have to scale it down. I’m thirteen. I’m not marrying anyone. I barely know him. Last year he thought I was trying to murder non-purebloods. And if you don’t scale it back, I might have to let it slip how much you like staring at his brother during Herbology.” He smiled smugly.

“You wouldn’t!”

“Oh I would. Out of love.” He sipped his hot chocolate as the Professors laughed. It was the best Christmas Anakin had ever had.

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Students came back and classes resumed. Anakin had several private chess games with Cody when they didn’t both have Quidditch or study sessions. Mostly the talked but some pretty great kissing happened occasionally as well.

He still met once a week in the Room of Requirement with Padmé, Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, Barriss, and Sola. They pushed each other to learn new spells, refine their fighting abilities. Barriss turned out to have a real talent with healing spells. Thankfully neither she nor Sola wanted to become Animagi. Barriss said the skill required too much effort for minimal payoff and Sola agreed.

On one such night Ahsoka asked about inviting Cody to their group nights. “No way,” said Anakin. “He could get hurt. Plus I like him but well, it’s not like I’m going to marry him. We can’t bring in everyone we have crushes on.” Obi-Wan voiced a wholehearted assent to that idea.

“Do you love him?” Ahsoka asked. Conversation in the room seemed to stop.

Anakin flushed. “I mean...no. But that’s okay, right? I don’t have to be in love with someone to date them do I?”

“No, but do you think you could fall in love with him?”

“I don’t know. He’s nice, I like talking to him, but I don’t think he loves me either.”

“What makes you say that?” Ahsoka asked.

“Well,” Anakin had been loath to bring this up with his friends. “He won’t hold my hand or anything in public. If we meet, it has to be private. He’s still afraid of being attracted to boys. If he doesn’t want people to know we’re together then how could he love me?”

“He what?!” Yelled Ahsoka, Barriss, Padmé, and Sola at the same time.

“I mean I didn’t push the issue. Maybe if I loved him I would have.” This conversation was making Anakin sad all of a sudden.

“Oooh, I’ll kill him.” Ahsoka said, voice full of fury.

“He’s in my House. It would be faster and easier if I killed him,” Obi-Wan said.

“Guys!” Anakin shouted. “No one is killing Cody! It’s my relationship. Not that I don’t appreciate the enthusiasm, but I will handle this. And if I’m alright with a non-public relationship right now, that’s my decision.”

“I know,” said Ahsoka quietly. “You just deserve way better than someone who won’t hold your hand in public.”

“And I’m glad you all worry about me. And Barriss, I know you and Sola are comfortable being out together in public, but that’s not everyone’s experience.” Barriss and Sola nodded. “Plus, I clearly have the best friends ever, so who cares if my boyfriend isn’t perfect. Now, I need to get this hex down so let’s practice.”

January turned to February and once again, Anakin found himself in a foul mood. Nothing good ever happened around February. His friends were lenient with his mood at least. Ahsoka hadn’t even brought up a date with Cody.

“All these hearts and awful cherubs really are hideous, aren’t they?” Obi-Wan said in the library. Padmé was off with an O.W.L. study group so it was just the three of them.

“Exactly,” said Anakin. “Freezing winds outside, ugly decor inside, it’s the worst holiday ever.” A group of girls could be heard giggling loudly two tables over.

“Excuse you!” Ahsoka said. “Inane giggling is that way.” And she pointed to the door.

“Are you okay?” Anakin asked, arching an eyebrow.

“Fine. Except for certain idiot Chasers who wouldn’t know a girl liked them if she punched them in the face. Which she might.”

“I think I might end it with Cody,” Anakin said quietly.

Ahsoka gasped. “Why?”

“...I know it’s stupid but we’re allowed in Hogsmeade again and I wanted to go on actual date together. Not just play chess in an abandoned classroom. But he said no. He didn’t want people want people to point or stare at him. And then I thought of Barriss and how she’s our age and willing to risk her horrible mother’s wrath for liking Sola and...I stormed off. But it’s too much. I have so many secrets. I don’t want the person I’m dating to be one of them.”

“Oh Anakin,” Ahsoka rubbed his shoulder. “I’m sorry. And you’re right. You need someone who can stand by you proudly.”

“Yeah, I suppose I should do it before Valentine’s Day. Be less of an ass about it that way.”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan nodded.

Anakin met Cody for their weekly chess match. But before they got started he took a deep breath and said his piece. Cody looked sad, but said he understood. He said he wished things were different
and that Anakin deserved better. They hugged. All in all Anakin thought it was fairly painless. He’d miss the boy’s company but there were no dramatics, just a clean break. Still, he spent the rest of the day in his room with his curtains drawn.

It was Valentine’s Eve and all the students at Hogwarts it seemed were gushing over dates and love letters around dinner in the Great Hall. Barriss and Sola were keeping things low-key since Anakin was a bit down, at least.

Suddenly a first year came racing into the Hall, screaming. He ran straight to Professor Windu. All professors stood, instructing students to perform what Anakin now called the ‘panicked cattle shuffle’. On his way down to the dungeons he passed the door to the kitchens. The painting of the pear was slashed, as were several portraits nearby. There was blood on the floor but not much. Once in the Common Room, camped out with his dorm mates and Barriss on one of the couches, he got a “safe” message from all his friends. Soon Professor Tahl came in to address the whole House.

“We’re not exactly sure what happened tonight, but after the first year student reported to Professor Windu, the school’s alarms were tripped. There was an intruder in the school.” Several students gasped but most were quiet. “We believe that whoever it was intended to get into either the Slytherin or Hufflepuff dorms, as the only paintings harmed were those near the entrances to both dorms. It would be nearly impossible for an outsider to get into any Common Room, but I want you all to move in groups until we know what’s happened and apprehend the intruder. No one goes anywhere alone. Not even to run back and get a forgotten book. Is that clear? Mealtimes, bathrooms, no one is to go alone.”

Everyone nodded. “Good,” Professor Tahl continued. “And remember, if you see anything suspicious, tell your housemates and myself. We must all come together to protect ourselves and Hogwarts. I will be guarding the Common Room tonight personally. Professor Billaba will be doing the same for Hufflepuff. Now, rest up. Classes will be on for tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Woot, trying to round out Year 3 soon. Hope you enjoyed. As always please comment. I will send you whatever weird karma I have in exchange.
Anakin Skywalker and the End of Year 3

Chapter Summary

Nothing super climactic but Year 3 is done. Onto Year 4. Comments please. They keep the nargles away.

“Our school is being targeted by Death Eaters, and I have O.W.L.S.!” Padmé yelled. Anakin was impressed at her level of prioritization. They were in the Room of Requirement once again, thinking of what, if anything, they could do.

“What could they possibly want?” Ahsoka asked.

“Anakin,” Barriss said darkly. “He’s linked to the Dark Lord. The only one to survive him not once but twice. He wants Anakin.” Unfortunately Anakin had to agree with her logic.

“That makes sense,” said Padmé. “So no leaving the castle grounds for you, Anakin. It’s too dangerous. They could have an informant in the castle. They probably don’t know you’re an Animagi or that you can cast a Patronus, but we shouldn’t count on that. One of us should be with you at all times.” Anakin finished off his chocolate frog, a gift Sola had given to everyone. “And mum says that Dooku is going to visit again soon. We need to make sure you’re kept well away from him when he comes.” Anakin nodded around a mouth of sweet crispy goodness.

“I have classes with at least someone in here during the day,” he said. “And Tyzen, Barriss, and I can go to Quidditch practice together. Mealtimes are covered so I think we’re good.”

“Good. And no sneaking off to go flying. Quidditch Pitch only.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Anakin saluted. “But same should go for all of us. No one goes anywhere alone. Not going off to run or fly, not to meditate. Together until this is sorted.”

“Bathrooms in pairs, too.” Ahsoka said. “After last year, better to not leave anything to chance.” She shuddered at the memory of seeing the basilisk.

“Whoever tried to get in did a bit of a crap job, didn’t they?” Obi-Wan asked. “As if they didn’t know exactly where the Slytherin or Hufflepuff dorms were.”

“True,” said Barriss. “Anyone who went to Hogwarts at either House or just did enough snooping around should know. But the barrel and the wall between the sconces were untouched.”

“So a former Gryffindor or Ravenclaw could have done it?” Asked Obi-Wan.

“Maybe,” said Sola. “We shouldn’t rule anything out yet though. Not until we know more.”

“Are you alright Anakin?” Obi-Wan had noticed the other boy’s nervousness.

“I just...I don’t want to wake up and see more bodies in the Prophet tomorrow. Maybe I should talk to Professor Kolar about seeing if I can develop my visions. Get better at them.”

“I’ll help if you want,” offered Sola. “I’ve got a bit of talent there as well.”
Anakin smiled, and suggested they talk to the man after class tomorrow, to which she agreed.

The group dispersed in twos and threes. Anakin and Obi-Wan were the last ones out. “You really think the Dark Lord is after you?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Maybe,” Anakin said. “Or you. It looked like the intruder could have been going for either dorm. Everyone knows we’re friends. If someone came for you I’d go after them.”

“You shouldn’t,” Obi-Wan replied. “I wouldn’t be worth you getting killed.”

Anakin scoffed. “And if I were kidnapped would you sit around waiting for an Auror to save me? Oh right, you didn’t. We’re in this together. ‘Til the end of the line.” He smiled.

“You’re right, I just don’t want the line to end too soon.”

“Sometime this summer I have GOT to show you some Muggle films. You’d love The Avengers.”

Obi-Wan smiled, standing in front of the large barrel that marked the Hufflepuff dorm entrance.

“It’s a plan. Good, night Anakin.” He hugged his friend tightly and announced the password, disappearing into the round entrance.

Anakin wondered when he’s stop feeling this way about Obi-Wan. He sighed and made his way to his dorm.

The next Quidditch Match was Slytherin against Hufflepuff. Anakin and Obi-Wan’s friends were divided. Anakin huddled with his team in the cold mid-morning of March. Kao was detailing their strategy and Barriss was listening intently. Anakin was distracted by the sight of Obi-Wan in his Quidditch kit. But he knew the plays by heart. When the whistle blew they were off. Anakin got the quaffle immediately and passed it off to Bruck, who passed it back when Anakin was further up the pitch. Anakin put on a burst of speed for the shot and threw, but the Keeper guarded the goal ferociously.

Anakin narrowly dodged a bludger, and passed again. Bruck made for a goal, but was stopped by Obi-Wan. Anakin grinned. His friend really was good. Hufflepuff fumbled the quaffle and Anakin swung in underneath the girl and caught it. He looped around as though to pass to Kao and threw for a goal at the last second, scoring. It was a tight game. Both teams had excellent Keepers though Hufflepuff’s Chasers aside from Obi-Wan were a bit sloppy and their Seeker was too green to go up against Barriss. When the Snitch was spotted, Barriss made a mad dive. The Hufflepuff seeker followed, but she lacked the confidence Barriss had. Barriss ruthlessly pushed the other girl aside, knowing the other Seeker couldn’t handle the speed she’d reached. She careened off path instantly. The Snitch was caught and Slytherin won the game.

With his feet back on the field, Anakin congratulated Obi-Wan on a game well played. The two grinned at each other like lunatics. Most of the crowd was heading back so they went off to the changing rooms. Bruck and Kao showered faster and were out, off to some celebration for upperclassmen. Anakin took his time, knowing Barriss would wait for him.

He had gotten his jeans and shirt on when someone slammed him from behind. He went sprawling, head connecting with the wooden bench painfully. The person was very large and picked him up, holding a wand to Anakin’s neck. He was wearing a mask which distorted his voice. “One word, and I kill you. Nod if you understand.” Anakin nodded, his head throbbing with pain and blood was obscuring his right eye. He was being held to his assailant’s chest by the man’s right arm. Which
meant his wrists were close together. He touched his bracelet as carefully as he could thinking ‘HELP’ and ‘Locker Room’. Followed by ‘One attacker’. He also used his bond with Obi-Wan.

“Now,” his attacker was saying. “I’ve got a nice portkey right over here, and we’re going to take a trip. You move one muscle, and I’ll kill you.” Something was familiar about the attacker, but he couldn’t place what. The more important thing was not getting near that portkey, which looked to be a dirty old broomstick.

“Then how am I supposed to walk over to the portkey?” Anakin used his best smartass tone. His attacker wasn’t overly intelligent. Piss him off and he might make a mistake. And he did. He threw Anakin to floor once again, and Anakin was sure he felt one of his ribs break. But Obi-Wan and Barriss had appeared and had stunned the attacker.

Obi-Wan helped him up. “Are you alright?” He asked. Anakin nodded and wheezed that he may have a broken rib. He pointed out the portkey.

“Barriss already sent her Patronus to Qui-Gon,” Obi-Wan said. “He’ll be here soon.” Anakin sat on the bench, Obi-Wan’s arm around him while Barriss kept her wand on the attacker. Sola soon joined as backup.

Minutes later Qui-Gon arrived. He cast an Incarcerous and said he’d drag the assailant up to the Headmaster’s office. Apparently Padmé and Ahsoka had been doing surveillance around the pitch for other possible attackers. Qui-Gon instructed Obi-Wan to take Anakin to Madame Che, which he did immediately.

Madame Che had him drink a pain potion, then stand very still as she reset his rib. It hurt, despite the pain potion. But he could breathe a bit easier. She cleaned up the bump on his head and made sure he didn’t have a concussion. Then she sent him back to his dorm, with direction to rest until Monday.

As soon as he left the Healer’s, Padmé found him. “You’re wanted in Yoda’s office. Everyone else is already there.” She hugged Anakin, which he returned.

In Yoda’s Office, it was the same crowd from the night of the Hogsmeade attack. Plus one. The assailant in the black robes had been de-masked but was still bound. It was Krell, the Gryffindor who had bullied him his first year. No wonder he’d seemed familiar. And hadn’t known how to get into either Hufflepuff or Slytherin.

“This is very disturbing,” the Headmaster said. “Mr. Skywalker, this man attacked you?”

“Yes sir, in the locker room. He said his intent was to portkey me to somewhere.”

“Did he say where?”

“No, sir.”

Professor Tahl spoke up. “We’re going to administer Veritaserum to this young man, and then the authorities will take him to holding for a trial.” She approached Krell, dropper of Veritaserum in hand. He tried to resist but Qui-Gon flicked his wrist and the ropes tightened. He opened his mouth. They waited for several long minutes, then Mace Windu spoke.

“What is your full name?”

“Althius Draconis Krell.”

“How did you get onto Hogwarts grounds today?”
“I told Professor Gallia that I was visiting a younger cousin in Slytherin who was playing.”

“Do you have such a cousin?”

“Yes. Bruck Chun.”

“And how did you get the portkey into the locker room?”

“I wrapped it in a blanket, told Bruck to take it in so Tachi could look at it later.”

“Did you wait for Mr. Skywalker to be in the locker room?”

“Yes. I left right before the Snitch was caught and waited. I saw Bruck and Chen leave, told them I was waiting for Tachi. Then I went in. I put my mask on, threw Skywalker into the bench. Then told him I’d kill him if he made a sound. Then told him to walk towards to the portkey. He made a smartass remark so threw him again. Then someone stunned me and there more people in the locker room. Professor Jinn brought me here.”

“Did you act alone, Mr. Krell?”

“Yes.”

“And one whose orders were you acting?”

Krell strained but was compelled to answer. “The Dark Lord. My Master.” There were a few gasps around the room.

“We have enough for evidence. Professor Windu, please see that Auror Mundi and Auror Koth escort him to the Ministry promptly.” Windu bowed and carried the bound Krell behind him, taking the lead over from Qui-Gon.

The Headmaster gestured for Obi-Wan and Anakin to sit in the recently vacated chairs.

“Things are becoming very dangerous, very quickly.” The Headmaster said. “It is good that you all have been keeping each other close. But how did Mr. Kenobi and Ms. Amidala know you were in trouble?”

Padmé spoke up. “These bracelets,” she said. “I made them last year. They let us send simple thoughts or messages to everyone else. When the basilisk attacks were going on I thought we all needed a way to communicate in case of an emergency.”

“Very resourceful,” Yoda said. “Many much older than you would not have had the consideration or ability to do so such a thing.” Padmé flushed under the praise. “Your wit may very well have saved Mr. Skywalker’s life.”

“Thank you, sir.” She said quietly.

“Mr. Kenobi, Ms. Offee, and Ms. Amidala. You acted as a team, carefully and thoughtfully to save your friend. Mr. Skywalker, you also acted admirably. You didn’t panic, you sought help in the most effective way you could. You have all earned your Houses 100 points each. Though I know you prioritize Hogwarts over any House distinctions. Unfortunately our current political administration is not capable of rewarding you the way you deserve. You will however, all receive letters of gratitude for invaluable services to Hogwarts. I hope you continue to be cautious, and to lead others with your example of unity.”
It didn’t sound like a dismissal.

“In fact,” Professor Tahl said, “we were hoping you could form the first ever House Unity club. Apparently you did make suggestions for inter-House clubs when you made your Vows.”

Ahsoka laughed and tried to cover it with a cough. “I mean, a club just based on unity sounds kind of lame. No offense, Professor Tahl. Actually, I think I have a way better way to create some unity.” Anakin did not like the look on Ahsoka’s face at all.

“And in addition,” Padmé said, “we could give an alternative to quidditch. Anakin, Obi-Wan, Barriss, Ahsoka, and I will have to go over the details, but we’ll get back to you. We do need a more unified Hogwarts if more attacks are in our future, and it looks like they are.”

“Indeed,” said the Headmaster. “And Mr. Skywalker, it saddens me to say that much of this will fall on your head.”

“I know, sir.” Anakin stated. “I figured as much when Palpatine disappeared after his plan to mutilate me and take my body didn’t work. But we believe in the Vows we took. We’ll work to make Hogwarts a cohesive front. And as earlier today proved, I won’t be doing any of it alone.”

They were dismissed and Padmé and Sola went off for the Ravenclaw tower. Obi-Wan and Anakin and Barriss escorted Ahsoka up to Gryffindor, then made their way back towards their dungeons. Before Obi-Wan once again entered the Hufflepuff Common Room, Anakin hugged him tightly. “Thank you for saving me” Anakin whispered. Obi-Wan clutched him back just as hard, replying that he was glad Anakin was safe. Then Anakin let go and headed on towards Slytherin with Barriss.

“I mean, I helped save you too and I didn’t get a h-aah!” Anakin hugged Barriss tightly.

“Happy now?” He teased, a smile on his face.

“Yeah, but don’t think I don’t know who you have the hots for now,” she sing-songed.

Anakin rolled his eyes. At this point who didn’t know?

Anakin couldn’t sleep. He felt a gentle nudge on his connection from Obi-Wan’s side. He responded in kind. ‘Can’t sleep?’ The Hufflepuff asked.

‘No. Palpatine is still out there somewhere. He has followers. Not just idiots like Krell but ones who have been killing people.’

‘Yeah. But we’ll keep each other safe.’ He felt the comfort and warmth Obi-Wan was sending him, reciprocated.

‘We will’ He agreed. He fell asleep not long after.

March snows flowed into April rains and Hogwarts had gone almost three weeks without word of an attack. Anakin thought they should put up a plaque.

He and Obi-Wan, along with Ahsoka and Padmé, Barriss and Sola, had been devising strategies for “unity”. Ahsoka’s suggestion was to create a tie switching game. Romantic partners or even just really good friends from different Houses could switch ties and see how long it took for anyone to
notice. Barriss and Sola volunteered to try and start the trend.

Then came Padmé’s suggestion about a Quidditch alternative. It turned out to be dueling teams. When Ahsoka pointed out that they had Dueling Club, Padmé had said they did, but what if they had teams and matches like for Quidditch? Except the teams would have to be inter-House. Four teams, all varying in House composition. Padmé suggested that Heads of House choose Team Captains based on who applied and who they thought showed the best leadership, but the drafting process was up to the Captains. Anakin and Obi-Wan thought it was brilliant. Ahsoka was hesitant but still on board. Barriss said she would relish the opportunity to put a few older Slytherins in their place, and Sola seemed eager as well.

Padmé, Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka would present the idea to the Headmaster and Deputy Headmaster, as well as Heads of House.

Padmé led the presentation and it went perfectly. However it was already April, so plans would be announced in May, with teams forming next year. In the meantime they continued practicing one night a week in the Room of Requirement. The closer O.W.L.S. got the more nervous Padmé became, despite everyone else reassuring her that she would outshine everyone. 

Ahsoka even walked by her leaning on Palo’s shoulder in the library, half asleep, and gave her a sly wink. Ahsoka reported back to everyone that it was worth it to see Padmé blush so hard. Anakin chimed in that Palo was a nice looking guy with his dark curls and smooth brown skin, and that Padmé could certainly do worse. Ahsoka and Barriss rolled their eyes at being the only ones to catch Obi-Wan’s frown.

In mid April Dooku visited again. Obi-Wan made sure the two of them were up in the Astronomy Tower until Padmé gave the all clear.

They came down after he left to a furious Padmé. “He said the work I was doing to get Dementors off campus was ‘simply adorable’. As though that cretin didn’t try and take my sister’s free will twice. TWICE! So help me, I’m going into politics and I am going to crush him. No one will even remember his name once I’m through. Oh, he also told me to give his best to ‘Mr. Skywalker during these trying times.’ I’d bet my wand he’s a Death Eater. That child-manipulating bastard!”

Anakin put his hand on Padmé’s shoulder gently. “But he was under staff supervision the whole time right? No portals or archways or chambers tampered with?”

Padmé deflated a bit. “No. Yoda was with him the entire visit. Though when I walked by he did try and get a look down towards the Hufflepuff and Slytherin dorms.”

“Don’t worry. It may not be today, but that bastard will get what’s coming to him.” Anakin said.

“And when he does, we’ll make sure he’s out of excuses and alibis.” Added Obi-Wan.

Padmé nodded, hugging them both. “You’re right. And I have a study group. See you tonight.”

“Once she’s a politician, anyone on the Dark Side should be running scared,” Obi-Wan said. Anakin agreed.

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It was early June and the last of the Fifth and Seventh Years were sitting their exams. Next week results would come out, and then summer. Obi-Wan insisted that Anakin spend the whole summer again, but he had to spend at least half of it with Owen. Not just because Master Yoda said time there was necessary to build the protective wards, but he missed his only living blood relative. He missed
Beru as well. He fidgeted with the hem of his robe in the hot sun. He’d need a new set for Fourth year at the rate he was growing.

“Aaand all exams should be finished,” Ahsoka said looking at her watch. Not twenty minutes later Padmé came down to meet them, immediately launching into a question about Ancient Runes she thought she might have misread.

Anakin looked at Obi-Wan. Today was the day that Ajunta Paal was supposed to receive the Dementor’s Kiss, and Obi-Wan had been quiet. Anakin squeezed his shoulder, and Obi-Wan squeezed back.

Next year might not be better. It might be rougher, more dangerous. But they would meet it as they had the previous three years. Together. And by the time they were done with Hogwarts, Palpatine would be the one who should be afraid.
Anakin Skywalker and the Beginning of Fourth Year

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anakin was thoroughly enjoying his summer. He’d spent most of it with Owen and Beru. Owen had gotten a job at a mechanic’s, and when his boss wasn’t there which was often, he let Anakin slide underneath or really get under the hood and show him what he was doing and why. When he’d made a firecall to Ahsoka, not realizing Beru was home, he thought he may have ruined everything when she walked in.

But she said magic was no secret among the First Nations of the Americas. She told him many stories, but when he asked about specific practices, she said that was sacred knowledge, only for tribal members to know and teach. Anakin nodded, understanding the need for privacy.

He became quite good at fixing cars with Owen. He understood the desired reactions to make things work, and how the parts needed to fit to achieve that. He even experimented with using his magic. He knew it wasn’t allowed, but if he didn’t use a wand, would anyone even know? There was a particularly tricky car in the shop. Coolant was leaking, causing the car to overheat, but multiple black light tests had been unable to show where the crack was. Anakin reached out with his magic, used it as another limb, and gently felt around. He directed Owen to the crack, and after a bit of hectic direction, they had it welded shut. Owen’s boss had been incredibly pleased that they wouldn’t have to waste more time or money on tests, so he was more lenient about letting Anakin in the shop after that. Owen’s boss was an aging man with a hooked nosed named Watto who wore the same pair of navy blue coveralls day after day. Anakin disliked getting too close to him as he smelled like the laundry he never did and cheap whiskey.

Anakin spent long, hot days in the garage with Owen, drinking flat soda and reading when there was a car he wasn’t allowed to work on. Or working on chemistry problems Beru gave him. Owen even let him behind the wheel of his bent up Ford for a few driving lessons out in the country.

When mid-August approached with its unbearable heat waves, compounded by the steel and concrete of the city, Anakin packed his trunk for Qui-Gon’s. The news from the Daily Prophet had been slow. No new attacks over the summer, for which Anakin was grateful. However Krell’s trial had only landed him a year in Azkaban. Dooku had done the official questioning in front of the Wizengamot and hadn’t even asked who had put him up to it. At least the Dementors had finally been removed from Hogwarts. Even Minister Valorum had had to admit they posed more of a threat to students than possible intruders and almost no protection. He had a feeling that Palpatine thought the attacks on Hogsmeade and himself would be easier. That now he’d be stepping up his game. He tried to push such thoughts aside.

“Almost ready to go?” Owen asked.

“Yeah, just a few more books to pack.” Anakin replied.

Owen ruffled his hair affectionately. “You’ve shot up like a weed this summer.” The man laughed.

Anakin straightened his hair. But it was true. He was as tall as Owen now. He’d dealt with painful leg cramps all summer. Maybe he would be as tall as his father had been.

He stowed the last of his books away and checked the time. He’d be expected soon. Beru met them in the living room. “Write or firecall anytime.” Owen said, hugging him tightly.
“You’ll do wonderfully this year. Next summer maybe ask Owen about bringing some friends home.” Beru hugged him as well.

Saying his goodbyes he tossed a pinch of floo powder into the fireplace and when he opened his eyes he was in Qui-Gon’s living room, stumbling out of his wide set fireplace.

Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan greeting him with hugs. Qui-Gon also remarked on his height. Anakin said he was happy to finally be taller than Obi-Wan, which for some reason made Obi-Wan blush. After getting his things, Artoo, and Threepio settled, he headed out with Obi-Wan for some Quidditch practice.

Later in the week they went to Diagon Alley. Anakin was fitted for a new set of robes, and they both got their new textbooks, potions supplies, and extra quills and paper. They ran into Cody who Anakin was now a full head taller than, and both boys stammered and made their exits. After that Qui-Gon treated them to ice cream and Florean and Fortescue’s.

“So, what electives will you boys be taking this year?” Qui-Gon asked, somehow managing to not get ice cream in his beard.

“Arithmancy, for sure,” said Anakin. “I already asked Professor Tiin to be in his class,” Anakin said. “And Ancient Runes. I wanted to do Care of Magical Creatures as well, but I don’t have time for both.”

“I’m doing Ancient Runes as well,” Obi-Wan replied. “And Care of Magical Creatures. I didn’t want to take on too much during my O.W.L. year.”

“A wise decision,” Qui-Gon said, finishing his ice cream.

The days of Quidditch matches and staying up late with tea came to an end as the first of September arrived. Though Anakin did receive several thoughtful gifts from his friends for his birthday. Owen’s gift had been the driving lessons as Anakin secretly thought he was saving up for a ring for Beru. Ahsoka got him a plain ring, a band of simple iron. She’d found it while visiting relatives in Nairobi. She said it would keep dark forces away. Padmé and Sola got him a framed photo of all six of them, taken after O.W.L.S that year, all of them smiling and waving. Barriss got him an impossible number of chocolate frogs, and Obi-Wan handed him a small scrap book. It was only a few pages, but it was filled with pictures of his parents from their days at Hogwarts. There was one of his mother playing Quidditch, another of the two of them laughing at something as they reclined on a grassy hill.

“Qui-Gon let me um, re-purpose parts of his old Year Books.” Obi-Wan stammered.

“It’s perfect.” Anakin said quietly and hugged them both.

Now they were once again on Platform 9 and ¾, about to start another school year and almost certainly face more danger. Obi-Wan squeezed his hand, sensing his thoughts.

They boarded and got a compartment with Ahsoka and Padmé. The girls found Anakin’s new height endlessly amusing. “It’s not my fault you’re all vertically challenged,” he’d huffed.

Padmé seemed much more relaxed this year. She’d of course gotten the best marks in her grade on her O.W.L.S and was already going through prep books for her N.E.W.Ts next year. And she was a Prefect this year, surprising no one.

The train ride passed quickly, and before they knew it they were at Hogwarts.
The Sorting and Welcoming Feast were comforting rituals, however this year there were some changes.

The Headmaster took the stand. “In the name of unity across the lines of magical communities, exchange programs are sometimes done. And this year, when Hogwarts is learning so much about how to be unified, we have invited eight exchange students. Please join me in giving them all a warm welcome! First, we have the proud sons of Durmstrang!”

Four young men in black tunics and pants marched in, standing at attention. They formed a circle and threw their wands up as one, and a dragon’s head made of flame roared. The then stepped back into their military-like poses to much applauding.

“And of course, the strong daughters of Beauxbatons!” Four girls walked into the Hall lightly. They too formed a circle, each casting a jet of water from her wand. The formed the perfect image of a merperson, who dove backwards into thin air and disappeared. They bowed and took their places with the Durmstrang students.

After the applause had died down the the Headmaster continued. “Our visitors will have their own rooms. But they will attend classes according to their year. Welcome them as your own and as you would wish to be welcomed. Also, there will be a Yule ball just before Winter Break this year.” There a lot of commotion at this announcement. “Now, bon apetite!”

The exchange students sat at the inter-House table. Anakin was a bit annoyed as that was his table, but he couldn’t really begrudge exchange students a place to sit.

Anakin settled into his dorm that night with Artoo on his lap and Threepio curled around his arm. The two were finally starting to be able to stand each other.

“I’m totally taking Ahsoka to the ball,” Petro said smugly. Anakin rolled his eyes. They day Ahsoka let Petro be her date, he’d eat his broom.

“It’s September. Bit early to be thinking about a Yule ball isn’t it?” Anakin asked.

“No way,” Petro replied. “With women you have to think about it early. Otherwise they think you’re only asking out of desperation.” That actually made sense, Anakin thought.

“Who do you want to take?” Lux asked Anakin.

“I mean, I don’t really like anyone at the moment.” He stuttered.

“Hm. Tough break, Barriss running off with a girl.” Lux offered.

“Barriss and Sola are great together. I was just her beard until she was ready to tell her parents she preferred girls.” Shit. Perhaps he’d said too much.

“Really?” Lux said with a calculating look. “But you must’ve fancied someone at some point.”

“Yeah, but it’s just a stupid ball. I’ll probably go with someone as a friend. Besides, I have more important things to think about this year. Like how we’re going to win the Quidditch Cup again.” He grinned, partially because it was true and partially because the distraction worked.

People who wanted to be Dueling Team Leaders were supposed to submit their names to their Heads of House by Friday. Anakin already had Quidditch, his Monday night meetings with his friends
which he and Ahsoka referred to as Fight Club to the confusion of their pureblood friends, his classes, and the books on O.W.L. preparation that Padmé had given him. But thinking of the other Slytherins who could be captain made him shudder. Plus the experience could be a great one. So he submitted his name to Professor Tahl.

The next Friday all potential Team Captains were to meet in the Great hall after dinner. The tables were pushed back to make a temporary ring, which Professor Gallia warded so spells couldn't go off and destroying property. Barriss was there but only as a spectator. Kao Chen and Bruck Chun would be fighting Anakin for Team Captain position. Obi-Wan was also there, along with two other Hufflepuffs, a Sixth and Seventh Year who Anakin didn’t know by name. Padmé and Sola were representing Ravenclaw along with Tera Sinube. And Ahsoka, and two Sixth Years named Knox Devaron and Kass Tod were representing Gryffindor. Actually, there were a lot of spectators. Even most of the new students were watching.

Gryffindor was up first. Ahsoka squared off against Knox. The young man kept his hair in thick locs that went down his back, not unlike Professor Kolar. He had hazel eyes and was only slightly taller than Ahsoka. He frequently did commentary for Quidditch games, but he looked less sure of himself with a wand in his hand. Ahsoka held firm, casting a wide stupefy to get a sense of how Knox moved. Ahsoka was used to dueling with Barriss and Sola, both of whom were impressively agile. Knox was not so gifted. He cast an Aguamenti which she easily shielded, then pivoted and caught him with a Jelly Legs curse while he still had his wand up, trying to cast. The match was called in Ahsoka’s favor.

Kass was next, and she knew what she was about. Ahsoka found herself on the defensive, dodging and shielding more than attacking. Anakin was watching intently, and he could feel Ahsoka pulling magic towards her, like he’d been trying to teach her in meditation. She cast a spell that caused a beam of light to erupt from her blade. It stayed there, about four feet long. The next curse that Kass threw, Ahsoka used her wand like a sword and parried it, sending it straight back to Kass, who was immobilized by her own Petrificus Totalus. Anakin was cheering loudly. They’d only discussed that spell in theory, never used it. But Ahsoka had performed brilliantly.

“Well done!” Called Professor Windu from his spot next to Professor Gallia. “We have our first Team Captain!” Ahsoka looked ecstatic.

Once Kass’s curse had been ended, she gave Ahsoka a one-armed hug. “I hope I’m on your team,” she said, smiling through her sweaty brow. “Because you have got to teach me that.” Ahsoka grinned and said it was a deal. They Gryffindors took their seat as the next House was called up. It looked like it would be sister against sister as Ravenclaw was up.

Padmé and Sola squared off. Sola was unbelievably fast, but Padmé had excellent instincts. Padmé cast a wide shield to deal with the flurry of hexes coming from her younger sister, waiting until she was fatigued. It paid off. Sola’s movements became slower, and she was only barely dodging the easy curses Padmé was throwing. Finally Padmé saw her opening, dropped her shield, and easily cast a stupefy that hit Sola dead center. The girl was ennervated and went to the stands to cheer Padmé on against Tera. Tera had placed second only to Padmé in most subjects. Her knowledge of curses and hexes was deep and wide. But she didn’t have the practice shielding and dodging that Padmé did. Nor the ability to think on one’s feet that only came from surviving dangerous situations. It was a long match. Tera’s dark hair was matted with sweat and Padmé wasn’t much better off. Finally, Padmé landed a Knockback Jinx immediately followed by an Expelliarmus.

“We have our second Team Captain, Padmé Amidala!” Professor Gallia announced.

Two Houses left. Professor Windu called Hufflepuff and the three young men stepped forward. Obi-
Wan wouldn’t be in the first fight. The Hufflepuffs in the ring were a Sixth Year boy, interestingly enough named Jinx, and a Seventh Year named Wedge.

Anakin sat with Obi-Wan as the two circled each other. Jinx Secura, Aayla’s younger brother, was agile as well. He moved about the space like a boxer would which threw Wedge off. Wedge almost caught him with a Stunning Jinx, but the boy dodged it expertly and hit Wedge with a powerful Impedimenta, followed by an Expelliarmus.

Obi-Wan stepped into the ring, prepared to deal with the wicked fast footwork that Jinx had. Taking a cue from Padmé, he cast wide shielding charms, forcing Jinx to use a lot of energy to get around them. His Aguamenti completely overwhelmed the older boy and Obi-Wan quickly followed up with a Leg Locker curse.

“Third Team Captain! Obi-Wan Kenobi!” Windu called.

Well, Anakin thought. It wasn’t their fault that they’d had more practice. No one was stopping the rest of the students from getting together and improving their dueling work.

Kao Chen and Bruck Chun went first. They were both large, imposing figures. Though Anakin was no longer small either. Kao clearly had training. He seemed to immediately spot all of Bruck’s weak spots. He took the other boy down like it was an easy quaffle score. Anakin swallowed.

“You’ve got this,” Obi-Wan said, hands on Anakin’s shoulders. Anakin nodded and told himself he’d at least put up a fight worth remembering.

Kao came at him fast. Unlike some duelers he had no issues with invading personal space if it got the desired result. Anakin focused and cast the strongest Protego shield he could. Then he charged forward, hoping beyond hope that this would work. He must have looked like a madman, charging towards someone hurling dangerous hexes. But he pulled the magic to him, made his shield impenetrable. When he literally had Kao in a corner, he swept the boy’s leg out from under him and petrified him. Everyone was quiet.

Professor Windu and Professor Gallia motioned him over. “There were no rules about physical contact.” Anakin said defensively.

“He’s right,” Gallia said.

“But there should be,” Windu replied.

“With all due respect professors,” Obi-Wan piped up from behind him, “Dueling teams are to make students ready for real battles. In a real fight people will use any means necessary.

Someone had ended the curse on Kao, as he was walking up to the group. “It’s true,” he said. “My father trained me. And Wizards can’t just use wands. Wands can be taken away. We have to use everything we have. The match was fair.”


“Don’t think this means you can slack off at Quidditch practice,” he grinned.

“Of course not, Captain,” Anakin grinned back.

Professor Gallia said she’d announce the next step in choosing teams soon, and told everyone to get back to the dorms.
As Anakin left he overheard Mace muttering, “Do adults run this school anymore?”

On Saturday, after an awkward breakfast with the new students, Anakin and his friends met in their abandoned classroom.

“So we’re all Dueling Captains.” Padmé said. “This could be good.”

“Right, it could give us a lot of influence around other students. Especially since some of us are on Quidditch teams as well.” Anakin added.

“And since the Ministry has their heads up their ass about the Dark Lord being back at least in some capacity, we’ll need all the influence we can get.” Barriss commented.

“We should make sure our teams are diverse. I mean I know that was the plan, but we should go out of our way to recruit people who don’t play well with others.” Ahsoka stated.

“Agreed. We all need to be able to have an idea of what’s going on around the school,” Obi-Wan said.

“That was surprisingly Slytherin of you,” Anakin beamed and threw his arm around Obi-Wan. “I’m so proud.” Obi-Wan flushed and ducked his head down.

Padmé was about to exit the room to get to a study group but ducked back in at the last minute.

“What is it?” asked Barriss.

“One of those Durmstrang boys. He’s asked me to the Ball twice already and I said no both times. ‘No’ is a full sentence. If he asks again I’m hexing him.”

“Boys are idiots,” Ahsoka bemoaned.

“That idiot still hasn’t asked you?” Barriss questioned.

“Nope. I don’t even think he likes me that way. Anakin, if we don’t find dates will you go with me as a friend?”

“Absolutely. And I’ll cast a Confundus Charm on said idiot at the Ball if you want.”

“You’re the best, Sky Guy.”

“So are you, Snips.”

Finally Padmé left, followed by Sola and Barriss. Then Ahsoka went off for Gryffindor Quidditch practice.

“Anyone you’d want to take to the Ball? As more than a friend I mean?” Obi-Wan asked.

“I dunno. My last boyfriend wouldn’t even be seen with me in public. Odds of me finding a boy who wants to be seen dancing with me in dress robes seem pretty slim.” And wow, did that thought make Anakin depressed. “Maybe that should be my career. Professional Beard.”

Obi-Wan nudged him. “I know for a fact that you are not doomed to be a professional beard. More people than you think are into other men.”
“I should take out an ad in the Prophet. Seeking: boy between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Must be fine with mortal danger, the threat of Dark Lords, and improper use of abandoned classrooms. Also must love snakes and cats and be out to friends.”

Obi-Wan laughed but put his arm around Anakin. “Don’t be too hard on yourself. Everyone has baggage. And you deserve someone who makes you happy.” He didn’t take his arm away until he’d escorted Anakin all the way back to his dorm.

Chapter End Notes

So no Triwizard this year, but there are exchange students. And school-sanctioned Fight Club. And a Yule Ball.
It was nearly end of September. Most importantly, it was drafting day. The day when dueling team hopefuls would compete for a spot with one of the Team Leaders. Teams were limited to five players. Four active players and one back up.

Professor Tahl, Windu, and Qui-Gon would oversee the matches, along with the Captains. Even exchange students were allowed to compete. Anakin watched multiple matches. Wins didn’t count as necessary spots on a Team. Those were up to the discretion of Captains. Anakin watched many matches that Saturday. Exar Kun, an older boy from Durmstrang with long brown hair, performed particularly well. He showed strength but more importantly, adaptability.

Sola and Barriss proved their agility, and Bant Eerin her stamina. Anyone third year or up could compete, and Anakin felt like he was watching a Gladiatorial brawl. Two Beauxbatons girls held up well, though lacked in power what they had in finesse. Kao showed his skills proudly, but Bruck left something to be desired. Another Durmstrang boy, Kanan, already growing a beard, fiercely wielded curses and strong shields. Anakin was oddly please to see that Satine was hardly a fighter. She went down in her first match, refusing to enter a second one. At the end of the day, the competitors were dismissed and the Team Captains met to divvy up players.

“I want Kun.” Anakin said forcefully.

“Kun is mine,” Ahsoka said. “And Bridger.”

“I'll yield Bridger and Jarrus if you let me have Kun.” Anakin was no stranger to negotiation.

Ahsoka agreed. The negotiations went on and on.

By the end of the night, the teams were laid out.

Anakin had Exar Kun from Durmstrang, Kao Chen, Knox Devaron, and Bant Eerin. His backup was Wedge Antilles.

Padmé had Barriss, Sola, Jinx Secura, and Kass Todd. Her backup was Bruck Chun.

Ahsoka had Ezra Bridger from Durmstrang, Bultar Swan from Beauxbatons, Sabine Wren from Gryffindor, and Rex Fett. For backup she had Riyo Chuchi.

Obi-Wan was happy with his team as well. He had Kanan Jarrus from Durmstrang, Cody Fett, a Slytherin who only went by “Zeb”, Lux Bonteri, and Palo of Ravenclaw for backup.

After long negotiations, the Team Captains were to draw up names.

“They should be like Quidditch Team names, not affiliated with a House,” Ahsoka said.

“Hm,” said Anakin. “We’ll be The Swiftness.”

“We’ll be The Pack,” said Obi-Wan, catching onto the Animagi related name. “We’ll stick together.”

“The Uncanny,” said Padmé.
“The Prowlers,” Ahsoka confirmed.

They grinned. They couldn’t wait for the games to begin.

As September moved into October and then November, the first Quidditch Match of the season was underway. Ravenclaw vs. Slytherin. There was really no competition. Slytherin won with an overwhelming number of points, even without the snitch caught by Barriss.

But Anakin had no time for rest. The next day The Swiftness would face off against Padmé’s The Uncanny. Anakin had practiced two nights a week with his team. Kun seemed to think it was overkill, but he was an exchange student. He didn’t know that Padmé was one of his best friends.

When Sunday came, both teams were waiting anxiously.

The first match was between Kao and Kass. The two were well matched. Kao’s strength and Kass’ agility made them enthralling to watch. In the end Kass used her agility to out-maneuver her opponent, sliding behind him to petrify him. Anakin was upset but it was just the first match. He also noticed that the two seemed to be warming to each other on the benches. He smiled. After all, that was the reason for inter House competition. Then Bant was fighting Jinx, and Bant won soundly. They were two for two, which mean the captains fought.

Anakin shed his outer robe and prepared to fight Padmé. The girl was older than him by two years, knew more. But he could draw on magic like no one else. He couldn’t remember who unleashed the first hex. Only that it was countered, and everything else seemed to drift into the background as they fought. He rolled when she attacked, she parried when he went in. He was oblivious to the cheering around them. Finally she landed a curse when he had just lost his balance. Team Eagle Eye had won. But it was so, so narrow. Padmé helped him to his feet and they hugged. Then she leapt down from the ring and Palo lifted her up, Padmé still sweating and blushing. Anakin looked to Obi-Wan and smiled brightly. He had lost but their purpose had been served.

“Now your duelist is taking my duelist to the Yule Ball,” Padmé said, pretending to be annoyed.

Anakin laughed. “Kao is free to take whoever he wants to the Yule Ball. Besides, you sort of love them together, admit it.”

“Oh, I totally admit,” Padmé said, shoveling a sandwich into her mouth as she’d been late for lunch.

“Do all of you already have dates for the Yule Ball?” Ezra Bridger asked in a thick accent.

“No,” Ahsoka said, blushing a bit. “Some boys are too dumb to ask the girls they like.”

“Oh, I understand that.” Ezra replied. Really, he wasn’t bad looking. He was a Metamorphagi who chose to keep his hair blue and half the girls at Hogwarts had crushes on him. “Maybe you and I should talk? About Quidditch or dueling. We could walk around the lake.”

“I’d like that,” Ahsoka said, blushing.

Afterwards Anakin asked her what she was on about. “Well if Rex won’t ask me then I might as well go with a cute boy who will!” She’d replied. Anakin couldn’t fault the logic. If he hadn’t been fairly sure that Kanan had a thing for Ezra, he would’ve asked Kanan.
During Transfigurations the next day Rex came up to him. “Hey, you’re friends with Ahsoka. Do you know who she wants to go to the Ball with?”

“Rex, We’re in Fourth Year, not Second. If you want to ask Ahsoka, ask her.”

Rex had huffed off, mumbling something about everything being so complicated. Anakin rolled his eyes.

It was only barely November and everyone was acting like the Yule Ball was the end of the world.

A Hogsmeade weekend came up and Anakin got a set of dress robes. Black with crimson accents. They were soft and with his height, made him look slightly imposing. He also got some Christmas shopping out of the way. When he met Obi-Wan and the others for a Butterbeer, they saw Professor Jinn and Professor Tahl in a corner booth, Qui-Gon’s hand covering hers. The found a table out of view of their teachers. “Huh,” said Anakin. “Guess they’re official now.”

“Yep,” smirked Obi-Wan. “Qui-Gon never gets nervous and he kept asking me if she needed anything like expensive cauldrons or dragonhide gloves.”

“Are you okay with it?” Anakin asked his friend.

“Yeah. She’s nice and I know he could use some companionship in his life. Might make summers a bit awkward but I already live with a Professor, so can’t be too bad.” Anakin nodded and sipped his Butterbeer.

The next day in Potions, Anakin was working with Barriss. As they prepared the boomslang skin just so, he noticed something different. “Are you wearing Sola’s Ravenclaw tie?”

“Yes. And she’s wearing mine. Five galleons says this trend takes off before the end of the month.

“I know you Barriss. I’m not dumb enough to bet against you.” She grinned smugly.

And she was right. Less than two weeks and several couples were wearing each other’s ties. Kass and Kao had switched, the Chinese Slytherin boy sporting a red and gold tie and Kass keeping his green and silver one in a messy windsor around her neck. Jinx, the Sixth Year Hufflepuff boy with long, wild hair was apparently now dating Sabine Wren of Gryffindor. She’d even added yellow streaks to her purple hair to accent her new tie.

Walking around the grounds he had to admit that House segregation among friend groups looked to be at an all time low. There were still some people who held on to grudges though. Like Barriss’ parents. She’d gotten two howlers already from her mother about needing to find a future husband and stop wasting time with “that Ravenclaw girl”. She made a sport of hurling hexes at the howlers while they screamed.

As the Ball got nearer Anakin did become a bit more nervous. Though he told himself he’d either go with someone as a friend or just skip it altogether. Dancing lessons from Professor Tahl had been a bit traumatizing.

But it seemed as though most of the school had already partnered up. A few girls including Riyo had asked him to and he’d stammered the most polite “no” he could. Then she’d asked if he already had a date, and if he didn’t then why wouldn’t he go with her? Anakin was tired of lying by omission. “I like boys.” He’d said, and as Riyo walked off, he wondered if he’d been too impulsive. Riyo was known for gossip. But at least this way maybe some guy would would ask him.
He regretted it by the next day. The whispers were almost as bad as when he’d been suspected of murdering students via basilisk. And just like Muggle school, there were words whispered that hurt to hear. Maybe Cody had been right about staying in the closet. Thankfully he had his friends. Padmé, Ahsoka, Barriss, and Sola had gained reputations as excellent duelists. And when they’d been sitting in Potions one morning, and Riyo had whispered a particularly nasty slur in regards to Anakin, Ahsoka had stood, turned to face the girl, and threatened in front of the entire classroom hex her into next year. Barriss had also stood and said that Riyo had no room to be saying things like that unless she wanted all of the Chuchi family’s secrets to be aired. Professor Tahl had awarded points to Gryffindor and Slytherin for standing against bigotry, and given Riyo detention. Anakin loved his friends.

Obi-Wan slid in next to him at lunch. “Did Riyo honestly say that?” He’d asked.

“Yeah, but Ahsoka and Barriss had it covered.” Anakin smiled slightly. “Ahsoka’s even considering cutting her from The Prowlers dueling team.”

“Good. If hear anything like that from anyone on my team or in my House, I’ll shut them down. Honestly, Muggles are more accepting of being gay than some Wizards. They should be ashamed of themselves.”

“A gay-straight alliance!” Padmé said, excitably.

“A what?” Anakin asked.

“Muggle schools sometimes have clubs called Gay-Straight Alliances or Rainbow Clubs. We should have one.”

“Do we even have enough people? I mean I only know four people on campus and that’s including myself.” Anakin said skeptically.

“Trust me, there are WAY more than four people. Especially if you factor in people who are bisexual. Plus it could help make progress in the Wizarding World. If kids go to a school that normalizes same gender relationships, that’ll be more people in the magical community who won’t see it as an issue. And given that Professor Tahl gave points for fighting against bigotry, I bet she’d sponsor it.”

Anakin mulled it over. It would be good for younger kids. He’d wished he’d known he wasn’t alone second year. And if Head of Slytherin House ran it, it would reflect well on Slytherin too.

“I think you’re onto something. You, me, Barriss, and Sola should talk to Professor Tahl.” Anakin agreed.

“What about me?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Of course we want you to come. I just figured that since it’s your O.W.L. year you might be too busy already.” Anakin replied.

“Hufflepuffs are never too busy for justice.” The auburn-haired boy replied haughtily.

They finally all found time to approach Professor Tahl with their idea. She was extremely enthusiastic about it. And she said that as a bisexual woman who’d had a hard time herself in school,
she’d be thrilled to be their sponsor. They decided on “The Rainbow Alliance” and put up fliers that they’d meet once a month in the Potions classroom.

In the meantime, Quidditch and dueling took up everyone’s time. Hufflepuff beat Gryffindor in the last match before winter break. Obi-Wan was such an effective Chaser that Hufflepuff had even needed the Snitch to be caught, even though it eventually was.

The next day was the last dueling match of the term. Obi-Wan’s The Pack against Ahsoka’s The Prowlers. Ahsoka put Ezra up first. The Durmstrang boy was hot-headed but could also think on his feet. Obi-Wan put Lux up against Ezra. The two fought well, exchanging curses and shielding easily, getting a feel for each other. Lux feinted left but Ezra wasn’t fooled. Ezra shot fire from his wand, which Lux rolled away from in the nick of time. Lux’s shield were lagging. He dropped them to try and get a clean shot but was too slow, and went down. Cody won against Bultar Swan from Beauxbatons, and Zeb won against Sabine, though barely. Then it was down to Obi-Wan and Ahsoka. Obi-Wan could do defense all day. He knew Ahsoka was impatient and he planned to wait her out. Obi-Wan’s team would win regardless of this one match, but he was determined. Ahsoka tried to roll and dodge to get closer to her opponent and find an opening in Obi-Wan’s defenses. He faked a slow Protego and when she tried to take advantage, he hit her with an Incarcerous.

The Pack won the match, and the Great Hall erupted in cheers. Anakin was going to find Obi-Wan and congratulate him, when he saw how closely he speaking with the Beauxbatons girl, Bultar Swan. He watched Obi-Wan flush at some comment she made and hated that it had been years and he still cared about Obi-Wan far more than he should. Obi-Wan would always consider him a close friend, and he should be grateful for that. But instead here he was, fourteen and still jealous.

He turned to head towards the Slytherin dorms and shower. Someone caught his shoulder on his way out. He turned to see Cody looking at him nervously.

“I just wanted to say,” the Hufflepuff started, “that I’m sorry. I’m sorry I wasn’t brave enough to be seen with you and I was a coward. You’re starting this new Alliance and I know I screwed things up with us, but would it be alright if I joined?”

“Of course,” Anakin smiled. “No hard feelings. Coming out wasn’t the easiest thing I ever did. See you around?”

“Definitely.” Cody smiled and turned back towards his team.

With Dueling and Quidditch over for the term, and the Alliance not meeting until January, Anakin was left with classes and the Yule Ball. At least Arithmancy was fun. It was almost like solving Chemistry problems with Beru. And they’d gone a whole term with no murders or evil politicians on campus.

He and Ahsoka were working on Arithmancy in the library. She slammed her quill down.

“He still hasn’t asked?”

“No! And he actively avoids me. Even during Quidditch practice!”

“You could ask him.” Anakin said and received a withering glare. “Ooor go with someone else? I mean his loss. And Ezra does talk to you a lot.”

“Yeah, he doesn’t like me though. He said I remind him of his sister.” She thunked her against the
desk. “Have you asked anyone?”

He saved having to answer that by Obi-Wan sitting down at their table. “What are we talking about?” He asked.

“The Yule Ball and the idiocy of the male population of this school.” Ahsoka said darkly. Anakin nodded.

“Ah. It is a bit ridiculous. It’s all anyone thinks about these days.”

“So who are you going with?” Ahsoka asked.

Obi-Wan blushed. “I um, haven’t asked the person yet. I don’t know how they feel about me.”

“You should just go for it,” Ahsoka said. “You’re cute, objectively speaking. Captain of a Dueling team and a great Quidditch player. I’m sure whoever you ask would say yes.” She sighed. “Screw it. Maybe I will just ask him. If he says no at least I can stop thinking about him and move on.”

“That’s the spirit,” Anakin said cheerily. “Oh hey, who’s Padmé going with?”

“Palo. Finally. Those two have been dancing around each other forever.” Ahsoka said. “And I think he’ll be good for her. He can keep up with her intellectually but also be a free spirit. Her Dad’s not thrilled, thinks she should be dating people ‘of a higher station’. Meaning of course with more money, but she really likes him. Anytime the Ball comes up she blushes like an idiot. It’s refreshing to know she’s a mere mortal like us.”

Anakin laughed, happy that Padmé was happy. “So we should give him the speech soon?”

“Absolutely,” said Ahsoka.


“It’s a thing Ahsoka, Barriss, and I came up with after Cody and I broke up. When someone from our friend group starts dating someone not from our friend group, we give the speech. The one where we talk about how Barriss’ family is powerful enough to make people disappear, how Ahsoka has no fear of Azkaban if someone hurts her friends, and how I know of several Muggle ways to dispose of bodies which Aurors would never think of. So if that person thinks of deliberately hurting our friend, they can be assured of specific consequences.” Anakin said lightly.

“Good plan. I’m also pretty sure I’d send my entire dueling team after someone if the need arose.” Obi-Wan added.

“This why we’re all friends,” Ahsoka said cheerily. “But who do you want to ask to the Ball?”

Obi-Wan blushed again. “I’ll tell you after I ask them.”

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The Ball was less than a week away and Anakin didn’t have a date. He was trying not to care. He could just as easily spend that night studying or flying around the grounds as a Raven. Not much compared to that. Especially not some over-hyped school dance. Ahsoka had planned to ask Rex but Bruck had actually asked her first she’d said yes. Padmé had Palo, and Anakin wasn’t sure who Obi-Wan was so scared of asking.

He was sitting alone in the library, working through an essay for Defense. Someone pulled out the
chair opposite him. It was Ezra, which was unexpected.

“Hi,” he said in his thick accent.

“Hi,” Anakin replied. “What’s up?”

“So, this Ball. I was wondering. I mean I’m sure you have a date, but if not, would you like to go with me?”

Anakin was floored. “I um, I would. But aren’t you, I mean I don’t want to offend you. But I thought you were dating Kanan?”

Ezra smiled sadly. “I like Kanan. I won’t lie about that. But he made it clear that he doesn’t feel the same way about me. And I do like you. You’re a great fighter, clever and brave. I admire that. And I want to get to know you better.”

Ezra did have a charming smile, if he was honest. Plus Anakin liked someone who didn’t like him back as well. It seemed like as good a set up as he would find.

“Yeah, I’d love to go with you,” Anakin smiled. Ezra smiled back and made his excuses. But they made plans to take a walk around the castle together after dinner the next day.

When Anakin went to their Monday night Fight Club, Barriss asked him what he was smiling about.

“I am officially not spending the Yule Ball doing extra credit.” He replied.

Barriss whooped. “So what lucky guy did you ask?”

“He asked me, actually. I’m going with Ezra.”

“But doesn’t he have a thing for that other Durmstrang guy, Jarrus?”

“Yeah, but he said he told Kanan how he felt and Kanan said he didn’t feel the same way. He said he wanted to get know me better and not waste time on someone who wasn’t interested. He was really honest about it. We’re not engaged but we could have some fun together.”

“And it works because you have a guy you like who also doesn’t like you back. So it puts you on equal footing.” Barriss nodded appreciatively.

“Anakin doesn’t actually know if his Hogwarts boy likes him back, because he would never admit his feelings. Maybe Ezra can help him with that.” Padmé smiled wickedly.

“What Hogwarts boy?” Obi-Wan asked in an offended tone.

“One who definitely doesn’t like me back so we’re leaving it at that.” Anakin said.

Once they were done working on new spells for duels, everyone trickled out of the room. Padmé hung back to talk to Obi-Wan in private.

“Look, this isn’t my business, but I think if you tell that person you should have asked earlier, you’d be surprised at how well it goes.”

Obi-Wan hung his head. “Thanks. But I think maybe it’s just not meant to be.” Padmé hugged him and the left for their respective dorms.

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The evening of the Yule Ball was finally at Hogwarts. There was an ice sculpture of a stag in the center of the room, along with refreshments. The tables were gone and there fairy lights, and real fairies, hovering everywhere. There was a stage for a live band, and mistletoe everywhere. It was nearly time and all students were being urged to go get ready. The Ball would start at 8 and end at midnight.

In the dorms Lux was agonizing over his robes. Petro wasn’t doing much better. Petro was going with Kat Ooni and Lux was going with Riyo. He’d apologized to Anakin and said that he only asked her on the condition she not use homophobic slurs. Anakin had shrugged, largely unperturbed. Tyzen was going with Daara Haariden, a Gryffindor girl in their year.

Anakin straightened his robes and left to go meet his date.

“You look amazing,” Ezra smiled. He was wearing navy blue robes with gold accents, and Anakin had to admit they looked good together.

“Not so bad yourself.” Anakin smiled back. Ezra offered his arm and the entered the Great Hall. As they waited for more people to show up, they drank punch and discussed Quidditch. Ezra was a Seeker on a Durmstrang team and loved the sport. Anakin spotted Ahsoka, her braided hair up in a complicated looking bun and pinned by an ornament that looked a silver leaf. She wore a tight lavender dress. Bruck was ogling her in a way that made Anakin instantly uncomfortable. Padmé and Palo approached them. Padmé was wearing a midnight blue dress with no back and she looked amazing. Palo had his arm around her, though several boys were still looking her way. Barriss and Sola arrived holding hands, wearing dresses in each other’s House colors, complete with ties. Somehow they made it work.

Anakin noticed Ezra looking at Kanan and squeezed his hand, giving him a sympathetic smile. Obi-Wan entered with Bultar Swan. Obi-Wan was wearing simple grey dress robes with gold accents. Anakin lost his breath for a moment. It was Ezra’s turn to squeeze his hand.

The night wore on and Anakin did find himself having a good time. Neither he nor Ezra were any good at dancing, but jumping around on the dance floor like maniacs was still fun. They also danced a slow number together, twirling around the other pairs on the floor. Anakin was pretty sure he saw Kanan glaring at them a few times. Maybe he did like Ezra. They passed by Obi-Wan and Bultar, and Obi-Wan gave him an inscrutable look.

Ezra leaned in to whisper, “I think he’s jealous of me.” Anakin knew it wasn’t true but it made him smile. After that they took a break from the dance floor. They were standing near the door to the gardens through which several people were wandering. They were discussing Quidditch with Rex and Cody. Then Anakin heard Ahsoka’s raised voice. “Get your hands off of me, you slimy asshole!”

Before Anakin could react Rex was already running towards her voice. Ahsoka’s dress was torn at the top, and Bruck was holding a piece of it. Ahsoka had pushed him back but he made to move towards her again. Rex interrupted his plans with a fist to Bruck’s face. “She said don’t touch her, so don’t you fucking touch her!” Rex was livid. Bruck made to pull his wand but Anakin, Ezra, and Cody already had theirs out, ready to hex Bruck within an inch of his life.

“You’re not worth it anyway,” the Slytherin muttered, turning to walk away. Which was when Anakin hit him with a Tripping Jinx.

“Ahsoka, are you okay?” Anakin asked.

“Yeah. That creep tried to feel me up the second we got any privacy. I wish I knew a Castration
Curse.”

“Oh, I’m going to kick his ass,” Rex said darkly.

“Hey, thank you,” She said, putting her hand on Rex’s arm.

“Of course.” He cast a simple repair charm on her dress. “Can I escort you back in?” He offered his arm. Ahsoka beamed and took it.

Once they were out of earshot, Anakin said “About time. I thought they’d never get together.”

Ezra smiled. “They’re well-matched. Should we go back in and continue making people jealous?”

“You know, I think you’d be a Slytherin,” Anakin said teasingly. “But we do have some privacy out here. We could make use of it.” Ezra nodded and moved in. It was nice, Anakin thought. Nicer than the clumsy attempts with Cody. Ezra’s slightly shorter height felt nice against him and he put his arms around his date’s lower back. It was to date the best kiss Anakin thought he’d ever had, really.

Until there was a hand on his shoulder that wasn’t Ezra’s, pulling him back, and something blunt and fist like collided with the side of his face.

Ezra yelled something in German. Anakin was on the ground, cradling his jaw and trying to stand up. Kanan and Ezra were were yelling at each other in German. Or maybe they were conversing. It could be hard to tell with German. Finally standing Anakin turned on Kanan. “What the hell was that for?!!”

“I’m sorry,” Kanan replied, not looking particularly sorry. “I heard that someone in the gardens was being taken advantage of. Then I saw you two and I thought- I was wrong. I’m sorry.” The tall Durmstrang student looked incredibly awkward. Anakin rubbed his jaw, then healed it easily with his wand.

“It’s ok. I almost did the same thing for a friend of mine. She’s alright though. Not advantages being taken out here, I promise.” Kanan nodded and walked back into the Great Hall.

“I’m so sorry,” Ezra said, touching Anakin’s now-healed jaw.

“It’s fine, really. Though I think we can be sure that the guy has a thing for you. But going about it like a cave man was unnecessary.”

Ezra sighed. “He’s too worried about what his family would think to ever be with me, even if he does care.”

They re-entered the Hall and were immediately accosted by Padmé and Obi-Wan. “Is it true?” Padmé asked.

“Is what true?”

“Did Kanan really hit you?” She had her ‘I could murder a person and not mess up my manicure’ face on.

“Yeah, but he heard students talking about Bruck and Ahsoka, and misinterpreted. He thought I was um, taking advantage of Ezra. So he did a stupid thing, but not for a terrible reason.”

“And you’re okay?” Obi-Wan asked, moving in to examine Anakin’s face, touching both sides to get a good look.
“Yeah. Healed it myself.”

“Alright, I’m going to find Palo. But I’ll see you all tomorrow. We have plotting to do about Bruck’s behavior.”

“I’m going to go check on Ahsoka,” Ezra said, with subtle wink. Then Anakin and Obi-Wan were alone.

“Sorry that guy interrupted your night,” Obi-Wan said.

“Nah, I’ve still had a good time. Though honestly, these old money Wizards need to get over themselves. Kanan and Ezra clearly care for each other a lot.”

“Wait, are you trying to set your date up with someone else?”

“I mean if Kanan didn’t clearly want to be with Ezra the same way Ezra wants him, it wouldn’t matter. But I can’t exactly swoon over some guy who’s got it bad for someone else. I’m done being a beard or a secret. And I definitely don’t want to be a placeholder for another person.

Obi-Wan was standing very close. And it looked like he was about to say something. And then the amplified sound of Professor Windu’s voice echoed through the castle. “All students are to return to your dorms now. There is an emergency situation. Please calmly return to your Common Rooms and your Head of House will be with you shortly.

“Murderers?” Anakin asked.

“Could be Dementors,” Obi-Wan replied calmly.

“Or a werewolf pack.”

“Swarms of evil pixies.”

They continued the game back to their Common Rooms.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter STUFF will happen! Dueling and Patroni/Animagi will become more important.
Back in his Common Room, Anakin was waiting with the rest of his House for Professor Tahl to address them. They didn’t have to wait long. The Potions Master came in and immediately all talking ceased. Anakin had joked with Obi-Wan about what could be befalling Hogwarts now, but to end a Ball over an hour early meant it was something serious.

Professor Tahl was still wearing her green jewel toned dress with the lace up back. Anakin remembered the look of honest to god shock on Qui-Gon’s face when he’d seen her fondly.

“There’s been a serious incident. Not here or at Hogsmeade, but there’s been a mass breakout at Azkaban. We don’t know how it was done yet, but at least ten Death Eaters were freed. As we did last year, we’ll be closing Hogsmeade trips until further notice and we expect Dementors to be back on school grounds by the end of the week. We don’t know the names of all escapees, though doubtless the Prophet will publish them tomorrow. I won’t lie to you. This is cause for alarm. There are already calls for Minister Valorum to step down. Now more than ever we must stand as one Hogwarts. Keep your Housemates close, but also stand by your dueling teams, your friends from other Houses and other schools. If any of you need to speak with privately about anything, please do. I’m aware of the kinds of divides and hardships that such political times can put families through, and my door is always open to you. Now, I’ll be in my office for a few hours if anyone wants to stop by. If not, I suggest you try and get some rest.”

She left for her office near the potions classroom. Anakin was on the couch beside Barriss. He’d never seen the girl look more shaken. “What is it?” He asked her.

“The breakout...I don’t need to be good at statistics to know that at least someone in my family who was a Death Eater is free again. That’s how dark my family is. Anakin, I can’t go home. With the breakout and mum being sure the Dark Lord is back, they’ll force me to align myself against non-purebloods. Take my family’s traditional tattoos and the mark. There are rumors that he brands those in his inner circle. They’ll want to do that to me. To prove I’m a good pureblood and a good Oﬀee. They’ll forbid me from ever seeing Sola again.”

Anakin hugged his friend tightly. “I won’t let them have you. We’ll figure something out. You’ll stay here for Christmas.”

“They already expect me home.”

“We’ll make something up. Kanan is from old blood and old money. We’ll say you’re trying connect with him.”

“You think he’d help us?”

“I do. He understands your situation better than you might think. We’ll have a talk with him and Ezra tomorrow.”

“...Why are we all out here standing in the cold like idiots?” Kanan groused. Anakin conjured a small fire wandlessly, which left both Durmstrang boys standing with their mouths hung open.
“Because we need you help.” Anakin started. “The Azkaban breakout has effected some people personally. Barriss learned this morning that two of her relatives were freed in act.”

“Meaning I can’t go home to my family. They’ll try and make me join the Dark Lord. Sidious, Palpatine, whatever he’s calling himself these days. They’ll want me to take his brand.” She shifted her hijab nervously.

“And how are we supposed to help?” asked Ezra.

“For the second time in my life, I need a beard.” Barriss sighed. “Sola is my girlfriend. But my folks are old blood and old money. Not very keen on their only daughter refusing to do her job as broodmare. So in order to stay here over Winter Break, I need to fake a relationship.”

“And you want Kanan?” Ezra guessed.

“Yes. You don’t have any romantic attachments that are known about, I’m 90% certain that neither of us could ever be attracted to each other because I like girls and you well, don’t. It would give your parents a good reason to keep you here despite the attacks as well. And Ezra told me you’re not particularly thrilled at the prospect of going back to Durmstrang.”

“Stifling is too light a word for what Durmstrang is…” Ezra trailed off.

“I can speak for myself, Ezra, thanks. But okay. Say I were to agree. What would be required?”

“That’s the good part. Not very much. I’ll talk about how nice you are to me in front of the school’s biggest gossips, we hold hands in public every now and then, and possibly set up a fake “getting caught in the astronomy tower after curfew” bust.”

“How would we fake that?”

“There are at least two professors at this school that would do that for me, just to keep me from my psycho relatives. Really all you gotta do is stop staring at Ezra like a like you’re a puppy and quit punching Anakin.”

Kanan flushed. “I do not like like a...fine. I’ll do it. God knows I don’t want to go home either.” Anakin and Ezra nodded in a satisfied manner.

“Great,” Barriss said. “No all I gotta do is tell my girlfriend I have another beard and hope she doesn’t dump me. She deserves way better than this.” Barriss headed back to the castle to carry out her extremely unpleasant task. Ezra said he had to get a letter sent off to his parents, so Anakin was left standing awkwardly with Kanan.

“It is really hard, you know, when you come from families like Barriss and I do.” He was looking at his boots as he said it.

“I know. It’s not a walk in the park for me either. Someone once wrote an op-ed in the newspaper about how the ‘Chosen One’ should be more focused on creating more Skywalkers. And they published it! It’s absurd.” Kanan huffed a humorless laugh.

“And it sucks, because the one person I can’t seem to make myself stop caring about will never want me that way. But the way Ezra looks at you? I’d give anything for that.”

“My family would never allow it.” Kanan said darkly.

“When I got sorted into Slytherin, most of the school thought it meant I was going to be the next
Dark Lord. Some of them were happy about that. Just because you’re born somewhere or put somewhere doesn’t mean you have to fill other people’s expectations. Barriss is literally struggling with the possibility of never seeing her parents again. Not just for Sola but because she wants to fight for the Light. And she has people who will do anything to make sure she gets to make that choice for herself. We’d fight for you too if you wanted. Maybe just think about it.” Anakin extinguished the fire and headed back to the castle.

“Hey,” Kanan called out. Anakin turned. “He does look at you. You just don’t see it.”

The plan with Barriss and Kanan seemed to work, as she was granted permission to stay on at Hogwarts. Her mother was already picking out wedding venues. Anakin and his friends were hugging Padmé and Sola goodbye. Ahsoka had decided to stay as well, citing a house filled to the brim with relatives from Kenya who she’d already seen that summer. Anakin thought it might also be because Rex and Cody were staying. Their dad was an Auror so would be on back to back shifts after the break out.

The first few days of break were spent playing Quidditch and dueling, supervised by Qui-Gon. The snow fell in huge drifts, creating perfect conditions for snowball fights, which Barriss and Kanan pretended to be too cool for but were eventually dragged into.

Then, three days before Christmas, the dementors arrived. Anakin glared at them, feeling chilled from inside out just by their presence. Despite them, Anakin intended to have fun. He, Ezra, Rex, Cody, Obi-Wan, and Barriss were playing three on three quidditch. No Snitch, just chasers and a timer. Ezra was laughing on his broomstick at some outlandish maneuver Rex had just pulled over Cody, when he stopped abruptly. Anakin and Ahsoka looked up in time to see a Dementor creeping closer and closer to Ezra, who seemed to be paralyzed. They wasted no time and both shouted, ‘Expecto Patronum!’ sending the dementor far from the Quidditch Pitch. After they landed, Kanan and Barriss helping Ezra down, Kanan became furious.

“They let those things that close to students?” He had an arm thrown protectively around Ezra.

“We petitioned so hard to never let them near school grounds again after one almost got me last year,” Ahsoka said. “This has to be Dooku’s doing. Trying to terrorize us in our own home.”

Anakin agreed. “Come on, Slytherin Common room is closest. Let’s get Ezra in there to warm up and get some chocolate. It’s the best thing for a run in with one of those things.”

The group moved easily enough to the dungeons, and Anakin gave the password.

“Hey, we just broke tradition,” Barriss said, smiling. “Luminara said there haven’t been non-Slytherins in here in 700 years.”

“Dumb tradition,” Anakin replied. "Plus I've broken it before." He ran up to his dorm and got some of his chocolate. Barriss asked a House Elf to bring them some water and a round of hot chocolate.

Once Ezra got over his initial shock he sipped his cocoa. “I mean I’ve seen pictures of them, but never in person. It was awful. I’m going to have nightmares for weeks.”

Kanan pulled Ezra into his side.

“So that's why you all know the Patronus Charm? Because you've needed it with those things around?” Kanan asked.
“Yeah,” said Anakin. “Qui-Gon-Professor Jinn taught us.”

“It’s quite beautiful in here,” Ezra said, looking into the lake.

“It is. The Giant Squid usually goes by around nine in the mornings. Merpeople stop by too, sometimes.” Anakin said.

They stayed in the Common Room through dinner.

It was two days before Christmas. Anakin was hoping this year would be as fun as last year’s.

He was in Owlery, sending his presents to Owen and Beru off with a school owl and headed back down, when he saw Bruck Chun entering the Room of Requirement. It wasn’t an accident either. He deliberately opened it. Anakin was surprised that the Sixth year had stayed for break, as Rex needed no reason to kick his ass. Anakin didn’t either, for that matter.

He watched for a long time but Bruck didn’t come back out.

Anakin told his friends about the incident later, but no one seemed to know what to make of it.

Christmas Day was lovely. Rex got Ahsoka a beautiful blue and white necklace to match her braids. Kanan didn’t get Ezra a gift, but he did kiss him under the mistletoe, blushing at the catcalls from Barriss and Ahsoka. Barriss got a bracelet that Sola made for her out of one of her Ravenclaw ties.

Watching everyone in the Great Hall at Christmas Dinner, Anakin was happy for his friends. He was a bit lonely, but tried to remind himself that he was fourteen and not expected to be in a serious relationship. Speaking of lonely, Bruck looked very out of place, sitting nervously away from everyone else.

“Bit sickening yeah? How happy all the couples are?” Obi-Wan smiled at him.

“Only a tiny bit.” Anakin said. Qui-Gon was practically wrapped around Professor Tahl and he did NOT want to think about that.

“Must be nice,” Obi-Wan said.

“What? Do you miss Satine?” Anakin asked.

“God, no. So high maintenance and such a bigot to Barriss and Sola. I guess I miss having someone in general though.”

“Yeah, Cody may have been unwilling to be seen with me in public, but at least it was someone to talk to and spend time with.”

“I like spending time with you,” Obi-Wan said, a serious look on his face.

“And I like spending time with you, too,” Anakin said. He watched as Obi-Wan licked his lips. Oh god, was his friend actually going to kiss him?

“We’re um, we’re under mistletoe,” Obi-Wan said nervously.

“Oh,” Anakin said looking up. “We are.”
He was taller than Obi-Wan. Maybe he should do like Ahsoka said and just go for it. If their
friendship had survived basilisks and murderous Dark Lords, it would survive a kiss. Anakin leaned
down slightly and Obi-Wan moved in closer. It was hesitant, just a warm brush of lips. Then Anakin
pressed more forcefully and he felt Obi-Wan sigh, the Hufflepuff’s arms come around his lower
back. It was perfect. Anakin had never known a more perfect moment.

And then they were soaking wet, and Ahsoka and Barriss were cackling like mad, having just
doused them like dogs humping furniture. Anakin pushed his hair out of his eyes and rounded on the
two, trying to look very angry but failing as he couldn’t stop smiling. He was going to cast the
world’s strongest tickling hex on both of them, but they heard a noise from the side corridor leading
off from the Great Hall. A great booming that had everyone in the Hall in ready stance with wands
out. Anakin could hear the sound of boots on stone, and a very familiar laugh.

Kreia Acri pushed her way into the Great Hall, followed by Pong Krell, though he was masked, and
two other Death Eaters. Four Death Eaters. That didn’t mean a war or battle, it mean an objective.
Kreia had a white cloth over her eyes, blinded from where Anakin had attacked her last year.

“And what do we have here?” The old woman laughed. “Orphans with no homes on Christmas?
Boys!” She snapped her fingers. “You know what to do.” Krell aimed his wand at Obi-Wan and
Anakin threw himself in the way, realizing too late that that was the intended goal. He was trapped in
an Incarcerous curse. Kreia was casting Confringos left and right, causing chaos and explosions.
Qui-Gon and Professor Tahl incapacitated one of the Death Eaters and Anakin tried to stay calm. He
could risk transforming but the ropes might shrink with him. Three. Three enemy combatants left.
Bruck cast a stupefy at Ahsoka. Make that four combatants. Yoda put down another Death Eater.
Three. Three assailants was manageable. Krell still had him in ropes though.

Obi-Wan was hurling curses at Krell as Ahsoka and Rex took on Bruck. Anakin wasn’t sure who
did it, but Bruck’s robes went up in flames and he dropped his wand. Two then. Better odds. Just
Krell and Kreia now. Even though Anakin was tied up in ropes, he could feel the dark presence of
Dementors entering the Hall.

“Now boy,” Kreia was saying. “Unless you want all your friends to have their souls sucked out,
you’ll-” She was interrupted by five separate Patroni attacking the dementors. Qui-Gon’s German
Shepherd was there, along with Ahsoka’s lioness, Obi-Wan’s badger, and Barriss’ caracal. He
assumed the hyena was Professor Tahl’s. ‘Take that, you bitch’ Anakin thought.

Clearly their assailants hadn’t been expecting an army of Patroni. But while Kreia was blind, she
wasn’t stupid. She tossed an object wrapped in a cloth to Krell, told him to use it now, and Anakin
felt the tug of a portkey taking him somewhere. When he landed he had no idea where they were. It
didn’t matter, since Krell soon bludgeoned him in the skull hard enough to wipe any questions from
Anakin’s mind.

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Anakin awoke some hours later. At least he assumed. He had no way of telling time. He was in a
dark cell. No windows, no light. He felt around. Four solid walls, dirt floor, sturdy door. And his
wand was gone. However his bracelet wasn’t. He touched it, sent out ‘help’. Immediately he
received Obi-Wan’s reply. ‘Alive?!’

‘Yes.’ followed by ‘Cell’ and ‘no wand’.

Obi-Wan asked about any clues as to his location, but there were none. Anakin was in total darkness.
There were no smells, sounds, or textures to use as clues either.
He sat in the dark for what felt like eternity. Finally someone opened his cell door. He was again put in an Incarcerous curse, and floated into a room with only slightly more light than his cell had. Palpatine was in the room. Sitting on a throne-like chair.

“Ah, young Skywalker, we meet again.” The old man huffed dryly. He was sipping from a goblet. “Unicorn blood. Care for some?” Anakin shook his head. “Ah, I didn’t expect a young healthy man to indulge. I have my ways of staying alive, despite this wretched disease called aging. But I will best it in the end. And you will help with that. I once thought I could supplant my mind into your body and continue living, gaining a whole new life span. Now I see the futility in that. Even though we are bound, I would not survive for very long in your skin. However, using our connection to make a bond, siphoning off your spirit...That could work.”

“We aren’t bound.” Anakin ground out. “You’re just a crazy old man.”

“Oh but you’re wrong. We were bound even before you were born. When I killed you father. He was a gifted Seer, of course, Lucan Skywalker. He even saw that you would be my downfall. So of course I killed him. I meant to kill you too, still in your mother’s womb. But I thought of how useful you could be and how malleable children are.”

“Only you couldn’t mold me in your image.” Anakin was furious.

“No, I could not. And I understand that I was never meant to. You will serve me perfectly well as you are. I will take your life force when I need it, and you will wither as I grow stronger.”

“No,” Anakin said. “I won’t let you.”

“Oh my boy. It’s not an issue of consent. Simply one of taking.”

Then Anakin was hit with a Crucio. He’d never felt such pain. He tried to keep his wits about him. Notice things about the room. Anything he could send Obi-Wan that might be useful. There, there was a small door behind Palpatine’s chair, with an image of a boar carved into it.

Anakin screamed as the next Crucio hit him. When thought he might truly die from the pain, he was returned to his cell. After he transmitted details of the room he’d seen to Obi-Wan, he curled up on the hard floor and cried, scared as he’d never been before in his life.

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“We can’t just wait!” Obi-Wan was nearly shouting. “They could be doing anything to him! I know they are! I can feel his pain!”

“We don’t know where he’s being held. Until we have a lead, we can’t go blundering into the night,” Qui-Gon said.

“Wait,” said Obi-Wan. “There’s a room. Not the cell. He’s there, Palpatine. There’s a small door behind him. It has an iron hog’s head on it.”

Qui-Gon thought but could come up with nothing.

“The old warehouse out past Hogsmeade!” Avara Tahl said. “There were iron hogs heads all over that place.”

“How do you know that?” Qui-Gon raised a brow.

“Used to meet my first girlfriend out there. But that could be our location.”
Obi-Wan fell to his knees. “Torture. They’re torturing him,” he gasped.

“Well let’s go!” Ahsoka shouted.

“Students are NOT going on a mission to save a kidnapped child,” Windu said.

“This student can cast a Patronus and is a duelist, and her best friend is being tortured by a psychopath who adults let into our school!” Ahsoka countered. “Try and keep me here and I’ll still get to the warehouse before you!” Mace stepped back, not used to seeing the dangerous flare in his student’s eyes.

“We all go,” said Obi-Wan. Except for Chun over there.” He nodded to Bruck’s unconscious body. We can leave him with the Headmaster.”

“I will watch him. All of you, however, need to go. All your strengths will be needed.” Avara said.

Suddenly Padmé and Sola ran into the Great Hall. “I apparated us as close as I could,” Padmé panted. “Let’s go get Anakin.”

So Mace Windu, Qui-Gon Jinn, Avara Tahl, Kanan Jarrus, Ezra Bridger, Obi-Wan Kenobi, the Amidala sisters, and Barriss Offee flooed to Hogsmeade and made for a warehouse nearly in the middle of nowhere.

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Anakin was fading. He didn’t want to sleep but everything hurt so much. As soon as he slept, another Death Eater appeared, casting another Crucio. Their plan was to break him. Make him unable to access his magic even without a wand. Make him defenseless. He curled up in the corner again. Even if he transformed, there was nowhere to go. He reached out to Obi-Wan through their bond. Pushed every emotion he’d never said through it. Someone was opening his cell door again. He told Obi-Wan he was sorry.

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He was in front of Palpatine again. He couldn’t take another Crucio. He was starving and could feel Dementors everywhere, draining him of all hope. But he pulled himself up on his knees. He’d go down proud and fighting. He swore it. And then a black panther attack one of the Death Eaters holding him, and a large wolf attacked the other. He heard the cry of an eagle and people all around him were firing off curses. Anakin pulled all the magic he had to him. If he was going to get out it had to be now. Krell approached him, wand out. Anakin pushed at the young man with everything he had left in his body. Krell fell, and didn’t look like he’d ever get up again. Anakin was exhausted and he let unconsciousness take him.

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Anakin was surprised upon waking. Surprised that he had woken up at all, actually. He was in the Healer’s rooms in Hogwarts. Madame Che came bustling in, administering him pain potions and all kinds of remedies. She had tears in her eyes. “Weren’t sure you’d make it.” She’d said. Anakin was so dazed he only nodded.

Qui-Gon came in next, sat next to his bed and put his large hand on Anakin’s shoulder. “You’ve had quite an ordeal,” the man said. “If it wasn’t for your bond with Obi-Wan, we very likely would have lost you.” Obi-Wan. That jogged a memory. Anakin tried to speak but found he couldn’t.

“Don’t. Your vocal chords are stressed at the moment. But Obi-Wan is fine. So are the rest of your
friends.” Anakin nodded and drifted off again.

The next time he woke Obi-Wan and Ahsoka were in the room. Ahsoka was also holding back tears. She hugged him as hard as she dared. “They almost got you.” She said. “We were so scared.” Anakin found he now had a pad and marker. “Missed you” he wrote on it, and then she did cry.

He was alone with Obi-Wan. He didn’t know what to say. Finally Obi-Wan talked. “They didn’t want us going after you, said it was too dangerous. But Ahsoka put Windu in his place. We both um, we killed Death Eaters that night. Not that I regret it. Bruck set it all up. He put a portkey in the Room of Requirement. Kreia was able to use it in her Animagus form, and carry people with her.”

Anakin scooted over, patted a spot on the bed for Obi-Wan. He kicked off his boots and lied down next to Anakin, curled over him protectively.

“I know you said you were sorry. That you thought you were dying. But never. Not on my watch. You and me, ‘til the end of the line, right?”

Anakin nodded and buried his head into Obi-Wan’s chest. He’d worry about the rest of the year as it happened. For right now he had Obi-Wan, who was pressing a gentle kiss into the top of his head, and that was enough.

Chapter End Notes

It only took them like three years! More drama and danger to come this years. Please leave comments. I need them. For science.
The rest of Christmas break passed in a blur. Anakin spent a few days in the Healer’s ward, then moved back into the Slytherin dorms. He’d only been captured for roughly a day and a half but with no light it had felt like so much longer. At least Qui-Gon had gotten his wand back. Bruck Chun had been expelled. He’d been found guilty of placing a portkey in the Room of Requirement, which had allowed Kreia in her Animagus form and the three Death Eaters she brought with her to the entrance to Hogwarts.

He’d never been afraid of the dark but he couldn’t stand it now. Especially not in the solitary confinement of the the Slytherin boys’ dorm. So he’d taken to sleeping on Qui-Gon’s couch, with the tree lit. Sometimes Obi-Wan slept on the floor next to him. He felt helpless at being so shaken from less than two days of captivity. But the darkness and the pain had almost become unbearable in that short time. At night when he couldn’t sleep he’d talk to Obi-Wan, telling him about the Cruciatus curse and the plan to break him. Obi-Wan would wrap himself around Anakin and just hold him, not saying anything. Anakin was grateful beyond words.

During the day someone was always with him. Usually multiple someones. Professor Tahl insisted on meeting with him frequently. He resented it at first but she was a good therapist. Slowly he came back to himself. He preferred to spend time inside, away from Dementors. But he, Padmé, Ahsoka, and Obi-Wan took to running the grounds in their Animagi forms at night. Twisting around Padmé, grazing Obi-Wan and Ahsoka gently with the backs of his talons, it was still just as amazing as ever.

The Headmaster and Mace Windu talked to him about how to handle things once students were back. His capture had made headlines since they’d had to contact the Aurors. Anakin said he didn’t care. He’d already been accused of murder and received slurs for being gay. People could say whatever they wanted about his capture. He only wanted one thing to be made clear. The Dark Lord was back and no one should be able to lie or hide from that fact.

It was a few days before students would be back, and Anakin and Obi-Wan were playing Exploding Snap in Qui-Gon’s spare bedroom while he was at a staff meeting. They were sitting next to each other on the floor, knees touching.

“I meant it, you know,” Obi-Wan said quietly.

Anakin looked up.

“When I kissed you. I don’t know what you’ve been through or how it might have changed how you see me, but I still care about you.”

Anakin leaned in and kissed Obi-Wan. Despite everything horrible that had happened, it was still the best part of his day. It felt like Christmas again, like everything was perfect. His hand came up to cradle Obi-Wan’s jaw and Obi-Wan leaned back so they could get closer. Anakin broke the kiss, curling up under Obi-Wan’s chin.

“I still care about you, too. I always have.” Anakin said.

“So, not to be pushy,” Obi-Wan said smiling, “But does this mean you’ll be my boyfriend? Public hand holding and all?”
Anakin laughed and kissed Obi-Wan again. “Of course it does. You think Barriss won the betting pool?”

“Most likely,” Obi-Wan said. “Ahsoka will be pissed.”

They stayed curled up on the floor together for a long time.

New Year’s passed uneventfully, and then students were back the day before term started. Anakin was immediately swamped with questions. “Where did they take you?” “What did they do to you?” He considered writing up a full length statement and posting it in the Great Hall so people could leave him alone. It was only thanks to Padmé, Ahsoka, and Barriss that he kept his grades up. Obi-Wan was studying for O.W.L.S. but his female friends seemed to know he needed extra motivation.

He did well as Team Captain at least. His capture had spurred him to learn everything he could about dueling. He even asked Professor Windu for extra lessons, which the man agreed to. And there was the first Rainbow Alliance meeting. It consisted of Professor Tahl, Anakin, Obi-Wan, Padmé, Ezra, Kanan, Barriss, Sola, Ahsoka, Rex, Cody, and Wedge, of all people.

“I’m bi,” he’d said nervously. As first meetings went it was nice. Mostly joking around and attempting to hex each other’s robes in Rainbow colors.

There was another Quidditch match Where Gryffindor destroyed Hufflepuff, leaving Slytherin and Gryffindor the contenders for the cup.

The next Duel was Anakin’s Team against Ahsoka’s. The first match was Bant against Bultar. Anakin had been training Bant, working with her on how to maintain her shields and attack. She stood her ground against the Beauxbatons girl and with a nicely placed stunner. The following match was Kao against Ezra. Kao, the dark haired Asian boy, seemed nervous about going up against his Durmstrang opponent. Kass was waving from the stands, rooting or Kao and wearing his Slytherin tie. Ezra was fast, but Kao could hold more power for longer periods of time. Ezra kept weaving in and out of Kao’s space, trying to lead the dance in the ring. But Kao saw through it. He hit Ezra with a Levicorpus, immediately followed by a Petrificus Totalus. Anakin’s team was leading 2-0. Rex won soundly against Knox, making it 2-1. The next match was Sabine Wren against Exar Kun of Durmstrang. Anakin knew Exar was a gifted fighter, but Sabine was fast and resourceful. There was never any telling what she would do. Exar was large, so Sabine went for light on her feet. She had a grace to her fighting style that few possessed. She cast a smoke charm to confuse her opponent. But he didn’t get caught up in the smoke as she’d hoped. Still, it was something. She cast another, Then at the last second as Exar lowered his wand to wave the smoke away, she caught him squarely with a Confingo. The match stood at 2-2. Normally backups would fight, but Riyo had been booted off the team for reasons Ahsoka had deemed “unapologetic homophobia.” So the Captains would duel for the winning match.

Anakin and Ahsoka stepped into the makeshift ring to the cheers of their Audience. Once Mace Windu gave the signal, Ahsoka was hurling hexes, putting Anakin on the defensive. He kept his shield charms strong, knowing Ahsoka would look for any opening. He cast a Confringo at her feet, knocking her off balance. Then tried to press the advantage but she was too quick. She immediately tried the same trick on him but instead of losing ground, he rolled forward, almost getting another stunner under her shields. She expanded her shields but he knew she didn’t have the stamina to hold them that wide for very long. He continued firing at her her feet, waiting until she was off balance and then casting a powerful Aguamenti which finally caused her to lose her balance. Then he had her in an Incarceros and the the match was won.
His teammates whooped in celebration. After she’d been released, she hugged Anakin. “Fancy footwork there, SkyGuy. You gotta show me sometime.”

And then Obi-Wan was hugging him, and life was pretty good for the moment.

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It was Padmé’s idea that they start training other students in the Patronus Charm, since a Dementor had already attacked a student less than three days since it had been on campus. Anakin agreed but didn’t want to use the Room of Requirement. Ever since Bruck had used it for nefarious purposes it didn’t seem right to show the secret to half the school. So they picked an abandoned classroom on the fourth floor. They warded it, and Padmé password-protected it. Then they recruited. They started small, with Ezra and Kanan, as well as Bant, Rex, and Cody. Obi-Wan didn’t have much time with O.W.L.S, but he helped when he could.

By the time March hit, almost everyone could cast a Patronus. Ezra and Kanan had taken to it naturally. Rex had also done well. Cody and Bant took longer, but by mid-March they could comfortably produce theirs. Rex’s lion complemented Ahsoka’s lioness perfectly which made both of them blush. Ezra produced a wild cat, and Kanan a leopard of some kind. Cody’s was a small blue jay and Bant finally was able to form her river otter.

Padmé and Anakin were considering taking on another small cohort.

Obi-Wan became more stressed the closer O.W.L.S. got. Anakin and Padmé helped him study whenever they could. Anakin reviewed Potions, Divinations, and Transfigurations while Padmé helped him with Defense, Charms, and Care of Magical Creatures. Padmé frequently left their study sessions early, around the time that Obi-Wan and Anakin started staring each other like idiots. Anakin wasn’t offended as he knew she was going to meet with Palo. And often enough intense study sessions ended up in making out. The ones that didn’t take place in the library at least.

Since his capture, whispers had followed him again. But now he had Obi-Wan to hold his hand while people whispered, which made it much more bearable. Ezra and Kanan were now his friends as well. Well, as friendly as Kanan got with anyone. Barriss was still feigning interest but Anakin could tell she hated it.

They were talking quietly in the library one afternoon. “I don’t know what I’m going to do. I can’t go home. I bought some time over Winter break but in a few months I’ll be expected to take the brand. Mom’s already been hinting about it.”

“What about staying the summer here? Obi-Wan and I will be. We could say something about how you and Kanan have a lot to talk about it. Then by the end of summer you’d be fifteen. You could petition for legal emancipation.”

“You’ve been talking to Padmé too much,” Barriss smiled. “The Wizengamot never allows emancipation for fifteen year olds unless there are proven signs of abuse. My mom’s a monster but she’s not a careless monster.”

“What if you...just went missing. Teenagers run away all the time, right?”

“And stay where? If I got caught living with a Professor of any adult, they’d be sent to Azkaban for kidnapping.

“Wait”! Anakin said. “What if we said you were spending the summer with Kanan’s family, and he we told his folks that he was spending it here at Hogwarts be closer to you? If you could get through
Fifth Year and get to next May where you’d turn sixteen, you’d be able to make your own decisions.”

“My parents will be really busy this summer with Ministry business...and it’d be much too late for them to take an extended break to Germany. It might work. Let’s talk to to Kanan.”

An hour later they found the boy in the library. “It could work,” he said. “But we have professors here who would lie for us. That’s not the case in Durmstrang.”

“No,” said Ezra, “But we have my parents. Dad’s on the school board and he’d play along if we asked him.

By the time they approached Qui-Gon, Avara, Windu, and the Headmaster, they had all the details worked out. Barriss had given her speech and the Hogwarts Professors were eyeing each other.

“And I already firecalled my dad,” Ezra was saying. “I think we can do this.”

“And if we get caught,” Windu said, “We could all lose our jobs and do time.”

Professor Tahl spoke up. “And if we don’t help, a young girl could be forced into a very dangerous path, which we could have saved her from.” Mace looked chastised at that at least.

“It it doesn’t work, I’ll run away. Make everyone think I was playing both sides to buy myself time.” Barriss said.

“Very well then, Ms. Offee,” Yoda said. “We will back any claims you need to make to your family, as well as Mr. Jarrus’. Hogwarts is a sanctuary, and we should not forget that.”

“Thank you,” Barriss said on the verge of tears. Before the Headmaster could move he found himself wrapped in her embrace. He smiled slowly and patted her back.

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April was unseasonably warm. It was the Saturday of the last Quidditch game of the season. Anakin was on the field in his Chaser gear, waiting for Madame Tachi to blow the whistle.

Then they were off. Anakin was a bit off his game. He hadn’t liked Bruck but the boy had been a decent Chaser. Not it was him, Finn Ertray as a last minute addition, and Lux. However they made several impressive plays and kept the Gryffindor Keeper on his toes. The real challenge of the game would be the Seekers. Both Ahsoka and Barriss were incredible players. Someone spotted the Snitch and both girls were off, neck and neck hurling towards the ground, pulling up at the same time, then pivoting after the Snitch. Anakin scored another quaffle goal, the Gryffindor Keeper only paying attention to the Seekers. Two more goals. They weren’t close enough to win on quaffle points alone though. The Seekers were skimming the grass. Ahsoka raised up on her hind legs and dove off her broom for the Snitch, rolling when she hit the ground. The crowd was quiet until she raised her hand in triumph, golden ball clutched tightly in it.

Anakin was disappointed since they had been so close to the Cup, but it was a hell of a play. He hugged Ahsoka on the pitch and lifted her high up, then he and Rex sat her on their shoulders.

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With the end of Quidditch Season and O.W.L.S around the corner, Obi-Wan was uncharacteristically stressed. He felt reasonably prepared, but O.W.L.S. took forever. Each subject had a written and practical exam. He really needed an O in Potions. He had to if he wanted to be an Auror.
Anakin luckily was a potions genius and seemed content to spend as many hours going over stirring theories and ingredient families as Obi-Wan wanted.

Anakin still had nightmares. Obi-Wan could feel them through the bond. He hated that he couldn’t just go into the Slytherin dorms and curl up with his boyfriend. Instead he pushed as much comfort and strength towards Anakin as he could.

No headway had been made in the Azkaban escape, except to name the escapees. Two of them were in fact from Barriss’ family. Sometimes when Anakin really couldn’t sleep, he’d pull the Angfinitum out of his night stand and look at the black and white snake. He never wanted to put it on, but it helped him remember why he’d get through the nightmares. Because of his family and the school he promised to protect.

Late May came and Fifth and Seventh Year students were practically sweating caffeine through their pores.

Anakin hugged Obi-Wan for good luck outside of the room where he’d take the written part of his Herbology exam. Finn, a Seventh Year Chaser for Slytherin, muttered something involving the world ‘homo’ as he walked by. Anakin hit him with a knee reversal hex then loudly wondered who would have done such a thing as Finn hit the ground. Obi-Wan hugged him again. Obi-Wan finished three O.W.L. subjects that day. Herbology, Care of Magical Creatures, and Charms. He wouldn’t know his results until all exams were done. Ancient Runes and Potions were tomorrow so he and Anakin stayed up late reviewing theory of complex potions like Polyjuice and the major magical properties of plant and insect families in brewing.

The next day Obi-Wan came out of his Potions practical looking quite pleased. All he had left was Defense, Arithmancy, History of Magic, and Astronomy. He came out of his last exam looking exhausted, and Anakin suggested he get some sleep before results were posted tomorrow. Obi-Wan agreed, but told Anakin to come with him.

Obi-Wan paced in front of the Room of Requirement three times while Anakin stood guard, then they both entered. Inside looked like a cozy flat, complete with a Queen sized bed. “We both need some sleep.” Obi-Wan grinned. “Come on, I’ll set an alarm.” Anakin hadn’t shared a bed with Obi-Wan since his rescue. But it seemed like a brilliant idea. They shed their boots and outer robes, and curled up under the light comforter. Obi-Wan was tucked into Anakin’s chest, Anakin’s chin over his head. Anakin hadn’t been so comfortable in ages.

A few days later everyone was buzzing with news of O.W.L. results. Obi-Wan took his envelope from Professor Gallia. Before opening it, he walked with Anakin to their spot by the lake. Barriss, Padmé, Ahsoka, and Sola were already waiting. Kanan and Ezra were with them.

“You got this!” Ahsoka said.

“You’re brilliant. The best Hufflepuff the House has had in ages.” Barriss added.

“I’ll be your boyfriend no matter how you did. But I bet you did fantastically,” Anakin added.

Obi-Wan took a deep breath and opened his envelope. He could barely believe his eyes.

His letter read:
Potions: O
History of Magic: E
Herbology: O
Charms: O
Arithmancy: O
Care of Magical Creatures: O
Defense: O
Ancient Runes: O
Astronomy: E

“I got Os in everything except Astronomy and History of Magic where I got Es! I’m going to Advanced Potions and Defense!

Anakin whooped, then tackled his boyfriend in a hug. “I know you’d do amazing.” Congratulations were given from everyone, and Ahsoka said they should have a party. Not just for Obi-Wan but for everyone who was done with O.W.L.S. and N.E.W.T.S. She, Barriss, and Sola began plotting immediately. They had their own end of term exams, but Anakin wasn’t too worried. He’d always done well and the amount of studying he’d done with Obi-Wan and Ahsoka had prepared him more than enough.

The party was set for Friday night, and the Hogwarts Express would be taking students home on Monday morning. Barriss, Kanan, and Ezra were all staying over the summer. So were Padmé and Sola. And Ahsoka. And Rex. And Cody.

Anakin’s own end of year exams were finally over. He’d done very well in all of them, even Divination which he’d been nervous about. Professor Kolar told him he should continue with the mystic arts, but Anakin wasn’t so sure. He’d especially enjoyed his Charms exam. After the written portion Professor Gallia had asked them to cast the strongest Charm he knew he was capable of. She and most of his class were quite impressed with his adder Patronus. Though something about it looked different. Its snout was longer, the scales not as defined.

After dinner he headed to the Gryffindor Common room to help set up for the party. There were streamers in all colors and all kinds of candy lying around. Anakin even monkeyed around with the Wizarding Wireless to get the speakers to amplify, thinking to himself that clearly technology and magic could be compatible. Rex and Ahsoka were in a corner, being disgustingly cute. Anakin considered hosing them down as Ahsoka had done to him on Christmas. But then Obi-Wan came in and he forgot about Rex and Ahsoka. As Owen would have put it, he was completely gone on Obi-Wan.

More people arrived, a few smuggling in bottles of liquor. Anakin tried some of Ogden’s Old Firewhiskey and wasn’t sure if he enjoyed it or not. But by midnight he was pleasantly buzzed and being pushed into a corner by Obi-Wan, happily kissing back. Obi-Wan moved his head back, pressing his forehead to Anakin’s. “We should spend the night together,” he said. “Not that we have to do anything. Just sleep.”
“And how are we going to manage that?” Anakin murmured.

“I told Rex that Cody was staying with him tonight. That leaves just you me the Hufflepuff boys’ dorm. And you, if you want.”

“I very much want,” Anakin said. They made their goodbyes and headed towards the dungeons.

They were nearly there when Windu’s voice called out. “And what are you two doing out so late?”

“The Gryffindors threw their own end of term celebration, sir. We were just getting more, um, Chocolate Frogs.”

“Chocolate Frogs.” Windu repeated.

“Yep! Better go find them now, before they hop away!” Anakin pulled Obi-Wan towards the Hufflepuff dorm.

Outside in the hall Mace rolled his eyes. If anyone deserved some privacy, he thought, it was those two. He could overlook it the one time.

Both boys were exhausted and really didn’t do much besides sleep. But it was the best night they’d ever had.

In the morning, Professors Windu, Jinn, and Tahl agreed to show the group around Hogsmeade. They also had two Aurors with them who Anakin recognized from Christmas.

They explored the bookshops, had Butterbeer at Madame Rosmerta’s, and Ezra loved Zonko’s. Kanan and Barriss made a show of being close, which Sola tried to be mature about she was clearly hurting.

The group was looking at the animals at the Emporium when an explosion shattered the ground near them. They looked behind them and people were already running. A group of masked Death Eaters was coming towards them, setting off explosions as they approached.

Qui-Gon moved to the front of the group. “You will not take Anakin Skywalker or any of our charges.”

A laugh followed by a woman with matted hair and a piece of cloth tied around her missing eyes appeared. Professor Tahl took the 2 o’clock position to Qui-Gon’s 10. Mace took the lead at noon and the Aurors took 5 and 7 behind the group of students.

“But one of you wants to go with us. Isn’t that right, Barriss?” Barriss narrowed her eyes.

“It’ll be a cold day in hell,” she shouted back.

Kreia attacked but Mace was ready. He, Qui-Gon, and Avara all had their shields up. Kreia and another Death Eater were hurling curses but Padmé saw an opening. She took a lesson from the last team duel and levitated the body before petrifying it, sending it crashing down hard.

Qui-Gon used the opening to get a shot in at the distracted Kreia, knocking her legs out from under her then catching her want with an Expelliarmus. Professor Tiin appeared and went left to go after a Death Eater. He was hit but kept going, giving the masked coward a fight. Anakin noticed one of them going for Tahl. He launched a Confringo at the masked person, sending them to the ground,
blood under their robes. He would not be going back to that cell, and neither would any of his friends.

More Death Eaters came. Anakin strengthened his shields as much as he could, and pushed forward. Obi-Wan dodged a Crucio and Stupefied his assailant. Ahsoka was using all the impressive footwork she had to keep her opponent on their toes. Finally she found an opening, using a stunning hex. Ezra petrified him for good measure. Obi-Wan was fighting a new opponent. He too strengthened his shield as much as he could. But instead of pressing in, he threw it, directing it with his wand and knocking the Death Eater unconscious.

Where were they all coming from? They was way more than 10 Azkaban escapees. These were well-practiced fighters.

“We have to get back to the castle grounds,” Windu was saying. Anakin agreed but couldn’t see how it was possible.

Padmé screamed. Two Death Eaters had her sister. Padmé would fight with wand or fist or talon, but she was helpless watching her sister be stunned by a Death Eater. Overhead a golden eagle screamed. It looked just like Padmé’s Animagi form, and it was carrying something large. It dropped the object right in front of Padmé. Time seemed to slow and Padmé picked it up. It was a bronze spear, slightly taller than she was. It had a thick base and one large, deadly arrow head at the top. It hummed with power. Padmé wasn’t sure how but she knew what to do. She grabbed the spear in both hands and let out a battle cry that Anakin wouldn’t have known she was capable of. She slammed the spear into the ground, looking the perfect image of Athena in battle. As soon as the base hit the ground, every Death Eater there fell unconscious, if they weren’t already. She approached Sola and one of them tried to get up and stop her. She hit him so hard across his face that his mask split, revealing light hair and a jawline just like Bruck’s. She didn’t care if he ever got up again.

Everyone had fought well, but there were some injuries. “Come on,” Padmé said. “The sooner we get back the sooner we’ll be safe. You two,” she pointed to the Aurors. “Stay here, take their wands and bind them, then call for backup.” They nodded and began their task. “The rest of you, help us apparate back as close to Hogwarts as you can.” The Professors and Aurors wisely followed her orders.

Back at the castle Madame Che checked over all of them. Kanan sustained minor wounds, jumping in front of a curse meant for Ezra. Qui-Gon had a nasty burn and Ahsoka had a minor concussion, but everyone else was just scrapes and bruises.

Once everyone was treated the Headmaster appeared in the hospital wing. “The Death Eaters have been caught, thanks to all of you. They will be taken somewhere besides Azkaban for holding. We have yet to determine where. Ms. Amidala” the old Wizard turned to her. “You are holding quite an interesting artifact. I wonder if you know what it is?”

Padmé looked at the spear she was still holding. “I-it was supposedly lost, long ago, just like the Angfinitum. But’s it’s the spear that Rowena Ravenclaw carried into battle. Rumored to have been made by the goddess Athena.”

“Yes, very good. And like the Angfinitum, it only will come to a true Heir of Ravenclaw, when their need for it is great and noble. Remember that, and use it well. It is a great honor to be granted permission to wield a Founder’s weapon.”

Padmé bowed to the small Headmaster. “I’ll do my best, sir.”

Anakin thought of the Angfinitium in his nightstand and wondered if they’d soon need all the
Despite the almost catastrophic beginning to summer, it wasn’t half bad. All the students staying for the summer had learned the Patronus Charm, and to vent excess energy, they’d often play “Zap the Dementor” where any Dementor they found on the grounds, they’d circle and cast their Patroni at in tandem. Headmaster Yoda seemed especially pleased by this game.

Dooku made a summer visit, and as he was looking at a Dementor, telling Professor Windu what perfect hunting machines they were, it went fleeing across the campus, followed by at least four Patroni. Professor Windu came to appreciate that game as well.

Anakin stayed with Qui-Gon over the summer, though he had to sleep on the couch. However the Professor didn’t object to Obi-Wan curling up behind him when he had particularly rough nightmare.

Barriss’ parents kept asking her to come home, that they had more pressing business than matchmaking now. She kept putting them off. She even had a calendar counting down to her sixteenth birthday when she could legally emancipate herself. She said she was a bit sad at missing out on her tattooing ceremony. So Sola had written Luminara, and one day in late June Luminara had showed up and offered to perform the ceremony herself. Barriss didn’t want her family’s traditional chin stripe. She and Luminara talking long into the night about a pattern that fit her. Finally Luminara suggested a diamond pattern across the bridge of her nose. It signified someone who had taken great risks in battle, and Barriss had certainly done that. Later that night Barriss emerged from the Slytherin Common room with a series of diamonds across her cheekbones and nose.

Anakin and Padmé told her she looked amazing. Sola said she’d never looked so beautiful. Luminara left, with the promise to always be there if Barriss needed her. She’d do whatever she could to keep her little cousin away from the Dark Lord and his cronies. They’d hugged, both sniffling, and the Luminara had flooed back to the Greece where she was studying ancient curse breaking.

Huddled up in the Slytherin Common room that night with all his friends, Anakin held Obi-Wan’s hand. They knew the coming years would be hard. That they’d probably sustain losses. If a squad of Death Eaters could just march into Hogsmeade, the Dark Lord must be stronger than he’d been in years. He held Obi-Wan’s hands, his legs stretched out over Ahsoka’s lap as she cuddled against Rex. Barriss and Sola were sharing a wing backed chair, looking quietly into the fire. Padmé was reading a book on the other chair, and Kanan and Ezra were tangled on the floor, pretending to not purposefully be tangled on the floor as Cody played a game of chess against Ezra. They had so much work to do. But for now, they’d at least give themselves this night.

Chapter End Notes

Woo, end of year 4! Three years to go. Fifth year is gonna be bitter sweet for me because it will be Padme's last before she graduates. But maybe she'll find a way to stick around :) Thank you to everyone who reads and comments! I kinda didn't think I'd get this far. I wish I had time to flesh this out into an actual book but that would A) Take forever and B) I don't own these characters or settings and i gotta do that thing where I survive capitalism. Anyway, please comment if you can as I live for comments.
Anakin Skywalker and the Ministry

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As summer came to an end, Ezra and Kanaan had to return to Durmstrang. They hugged their friends goodbye, promising to keep in touch. Barriss thanked Kanan for all he’d done for her, and promised that if he ever needed anything, she’d be there. Sola said she would be too.

With less than a week left before September first, Anakin and his friends took to roaming the grounds in the animal forms at night. Anakin found he could still communicate with Obi-Wan even when he was a raven and Obi-Wan a wolf. It was slightly different than using the bond while human, but still very much there. He raced Padmé in deep dives from castle turrets. During the day they practiced with Professor Windu and Qui-Gon at dueling until they were too sore to move.

Anakin was pleasantly surprised when he was made a Prefect, along with Barriss. Ahsoka and Rex were the Gryffindor Prefects and Sola, along with a boy named named Zatt were Ravenclaw Prefects. Padme of course was Head Girl.

Three days before the first of September, owls dropped Daily Prophets into their laps at breakfast. Anakin read the headline with lead in his stomach. A vote of no confidence had been called for Minister Valorum. He’d be stepping down at the end of the week. Tyrannus Dooku would be the Interim Minister until a proper vote could be held. He wasn’t shocked but that didn’t make it easy to swallow. More dementors at Hogwarts, more pureblood fanatics rising in the ministry’s ranks.

“We’ll have to work extra hard. Be as vigilant as we can,” Ahsoka said. “Train as many people in the Patronus as possible and make the Dueling Teams about learning.” They all nodded.

The other students arrived for the Welcoming Feast. But it seemed to Anakin as if the normal joy of the first day was tampered. Most likely by Dooku and the attacks at Hogsmeade over the summer.

After the Sorting, Yoda gave a speech. “Hard times lie ahead. I will not lie to anyone about that. But know that you are strong, and as many of you have taught us, you are stronger together. Hogwarts has faced many challenges throughout its many years, and it will face more. Know that the darkness may press in, but we are luminous beings. Together we will push it back.” He stepped down and the food appeared on the table.

Anakin ate slowly. He’d have his plate full this year. Quidditch, Dueling Captain, Meditation, more dueling with his friends, and O.W.L.S. Oh, and murderous psychopaths. He reached for Obi-Wan through the bond, and his boyfriend reached back. Obi-Wan at least knew him like no one else. And wanted him. They’d be ok, because they’d fight together like always.

When he got to his dorm and was getting settled in Lux asked him if it was true. “Have to elaborate, Lux.” He’d deadpanned.

“You and Obi-Wan finally got together?”

“Yeah,” Anakin smiled.

“That’s disgusting,” Petro said. “How could you find another guy attractive?”
“Oh I don’t know. I guess the same way any girl finds you attractive.”

Lux and Tyzen laughed, but Petro looked murderous.

“Unlike my bigoted cousin, I’d like to say congratulations,” Lux said.

“Me too,” said Tyzen. “You two were clearly mad for each other for ages. Glad you’re together now.”

“Thanks,” Anakin smiled.

“I’m sure your mum would just love to hear you congratulating some homo.” Petro said.

“Anakin saved your ass by going up against a basilisk, and Obi-Wan helped him. I’d shut up if I were you.” Lux snapped. Petro closed his curtains angrily and Anakin heard him put up silencing charms. “Sorry, I don’t know what his problem is,” Lux said.

“Don’t worry about it,” said Anakin. “You can’t control how other people act.”

Then they’d gotten into a discussion about Quidditch strategy for the year that had taken up the rest of the night.

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Classes the next morning were rough. Their professors wanted them in shape for the O.W.L.S. as soon as possible. Double Potions with the Gryffindors was spent going over major theories from previous years. Charms focused on the concept of temperature transference and by the time lunch rolled around, Anakin just wanted to cast a spell and not be waist deep in theory. Padmé was kind enough to lend him her notes from Fifth Year Revisions, which, he Barriss, and Ahsoka poured over in the library nearly every night. Anakin still didn’t know what he wanted to do for a living in the magical world, so he’d taken as many classes this year as he could. Which he now deeply regretted.

The weekend brought Quidditch Tryouts. Slytherin was down a Chaser with Finn graduating, and tryouts were intense. Unfortunately Petro got the spot.

Barriss and Sola were once again wearing each other’s House ties with many couples doing the same. Anakin had blushed as he offered his to Obi-Wan the following Monday at breakfast. But they’d traded happily.

When Anakin wasn’t having nightmares, he was having leg pains. He wondered how much taller he could possibly get. He was much taller than most students now and only barely fifteen.

The Dueling Captains had to make some changes due to graduations and exchange students leaving. They’d also done away with alternates. Of course anyone could challenge a Captain, but no one had. Anakin still had Kao, Knox, and Bant. He got Sabine from Ahsoka in exchange for not going for Rex.

Ahsoka had Rex, Sola, Cody, and Bastilla, a Fifth Year Ravenclaw girl.

Obi-Wan had Daara, Lux, Palo, and Korr, a Sixth Year Slytherin girl with a mean shielding charm.

Padmé had Barriss, Kass, Jinx, and Kat Ooni. Kat was only a fourth year but Padmé had liked her energy and fearlessness. After tryouts they dispersed and left Professor Windu and Professor Gallia to set the time of the first match.
The first few weeks of classes went quickly. Hogsmeade was still closed, but with so much reviewing to do for O.W.L.s it felt like no time. Since Anakin, Barriss, Sola, and Ahsoka had O.W.L.s, and Padmé had N.E.W.T.s, they decided that teaching new students could wait.

One morning a Prophet dropped, announcing that Dooku would be running for Minister of Magic. He had little competition, it seemed. Barriss said her parents were thrilled that they’d finally have “one of their own” in power. Barriss turned sixteen in May. She kept telling herself she just had to make it to May. They were already working on a way for her to stay over Winter Break again. Since if her parents saw she’d been tattooed without the traditional ceremony, they might actually kill her.

In November, after a lack of attacks, Hogsmeade weekends were on again. Anakin was suspicious. Of course the acting Minister would want everyone to think things were going smoothly. But he had cabin fever from so much studying and went on a chilly Saturday with his friends. He was in some tea shop with Obi-Wan, waiting for Ahsoka and Barriss to be done drooling over the new broom models out. They were holding hands lightly across the table, Anakin skimming a new book he’d bought and Obi-Wan paging through The Quibbler for a laugh. A couple walked by them and Anakin hadn’t even planned to look up, but a grating voice cut through the air. “Oh look, the Chosen Queer and his boyfriend.” Satine. Gods. Anakin was about to say something but Obi-Wan beat him to it.

“You’re more than welcome to take your homophobic short-sightedness and your horrendous dye job far away from us. As I recall, you’re not much of a duelist, and Anakin and I both are. So are our friends. If you say anything like that to either of us ever again I will personally hex you with boils that will take months to heal. And that goes for you, too.” Obi-Wan said, gesturing to Petro who had linked arms with Satine. The couple slunk off.

“Are you alright?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Better than ever,” Anakin grinned and moved in for a brief kiss. Ahsoka and Barriss finally showed and Obi-Wan recounted the event for them. “Ooooh,” Barriss said. “That little slime ball is on our Quidditch team. I vote he never gets the quaffle all season.”

The rest of the trip was very pleasant. Madame Rosmerta even remarked what a sweet couple the made and gave them Butterbeers on the house. Then Anakin set out on some Christmas shopping. He said Obi-Wan wasn’t allowed to come but Barriss could, as he’d already gotten her present.

“Who does Christmas shopping this early?” Ahsoka asked.

“Me, because you never know when Hogsmeade will be ruled off limits.”

After shopping, and walking back to the castle, Anakin was famished and ready for dinner.

As everyone sat down to eat, a third year Hufflepuff, Kara Ooni, was asking people where her sister was. No one seemed to know and Kara became increasingly distressed. Mace stepped down from the head table to talk to her. He told her he’d set out a locator spell, and they’d find her, calming the young girl.

Mace didn’t like the result he got. He signaled for Qui-Gon to join him. “She’s still in Hogsmeade,” he whispered to the Transfigurations Professor. They told Kara not to worry, that she probably got distracted.

But the two men and Professor Gallia left Hogwarts quickly.
“We should go,” Obi-Wan said. “She in my House. They might need us.”

“Ok,” Anakin agreed. “Barriss and Sola, you stay here in case it’s a diversion. We’ll stay in touch.”

Then Anakin, Obi-Wan, Padmé, and Ahsoka were off. They caught sight of their Professors apparating at the edge of the school grounds.

“Padmé and I will take the aerial approach. You two stay in the woods and I’ll keep you updated through Obi-Wan.”

Checking that there were no witnesses, a golden eagle and a raven soon took off, and a wolf and panther headed into the woods.

Anakin and Padmé flew quickly, and found where there professors were, along with Kat. The girl was catatonic. She was holding a crystal. Mace was saying it was cursed. Anakin relayed everything he could to Obi-Wan. The crystal was about five inches long, thick and some kind of blue color, though he couldn’t be totally sure. He did a sweep, and couldn’t spot any Death Eaters. Which didn’t mean they weren’t there. But he did see footprints. Not the professors’ as they were coming from the wrong direction. And much too large to be Kat’s. He gained altitude and tried to follow them. They led back to Rosmerta’s. He couldn’t go in there this time of evening, but he filed the information away.

Flying back, Mace was holding Kat while Qui-Gon wrapped the crystal in cloth and removed it from her vice-like grip. The four of them followed the professors back to Hogwarts. They transformed outside the castle and re-entered.

Padmé asked Sola if she’d seen anything, but no luck.

“That crystal,” Padmé whispered. “I’ve seen one like it before. In History of Magic. They used to be used in powerful rituals. But how would Kat have gotten one?”

“Anakin saw footprints. They led back to Rosmerta’s. Someone in there must have given it to her.”

“But why give a thirteen year old girl a crystal like that?” Anakin asked.

“There was wrapping paper near her. Qui-Gon picked it up but it had been wrapped. Maybe she wasn’t supposed to touch it.” Padmé suggested.

“We’ll know more when she wakes up. I’ve talked to Madame Che about being a Healer before. Maybe I could ask her after dinner in the name of curiosity about my career.” Barriss said.

“Good thinking. Let’s wait it out, then.”

The next day after as dinner was ending, Anakin felt the call along his bracelet. Meeting. Room of Requirement. Thirty minutes.

He and Obi-Wan arrived together, and soon the whole group was there.

“So, Barriss started, “I was able to talk to Madame Che about Kat. We were right, the crystal was cursed. With something nasty at that. St. Mungo’s is sending over their curse specialists tomorrow. So I don’t think she was the intended recipient. Someone at Rosmerta’s must have given it to her to give to someone else, but she got curious. Madame Che said the primary effect of the curse is the catatonic state. If the person holds on too long, it will kill them.”
“So the person behind this wanted Kat to give someone a cursed crystal. Someone who’d be interested enough in ritual crystals that they’d touch it without thinking about it. Who could that be?”

“Definitely someone at Hogwarts,” Anakin said. “Otherwise why give it to a student? She was probably meant to take it back to the castle.”

“So intended victim at Hogwarts,” Obi-Wan murmured. “We need to know more about this kind of crystal. What it’d be used for outside of cursing a student.”

“They were in protection rituals, mostly. Big ones. Meant to protect entire groups of people or places,” Sola said, gaining surprised looks. “What? I got cursed twice in one year. I read up on magical objects.”

“That makes us potential victims,” Obi-Wan said. “We made public Vows to protect Hogwarts. We’ve defended this school from all kinds of stuff. It makes sense that someone would assume one of us would consider a ritual of some kind.”

“It could also have been meant for the Headmaster,” Padmé said. “He knows things are going to get worse.”

“Right, but wouldn’t he strengthen wards instead of resorting to ritual magic?” Obi-Wan countered.

“Good point. Okay, until Kat wakes up and talks, we don’t know for sure.”

As they were leaving Anakin asked Obi-Wan to stop my Windu’s office with him.

When they got there, Anakin asked the Defense Professor to please make an announcement to students to not accept any packages from strangers under any circumstances.

Windu spluttered a bit. “How do you know any of that?”

“Professor Kolar said I was very good at seeing, sir.” Obi-Wan just smiled. Mace agreed, then poured himself a strong drink when they were gone.

A few days later Kat did wake up, but she didn’t have much to say of any use. Only that a man had told her the package had to get to Anakin Skywalker. Other than she couldn’t remember anything.

Anakin had O.W.L.s . He really didn’t need potential psycho stalkers as well.

The weather got well and truly cold. Two players had to be treated for hypothermia after a Quidditch Match, and that was with warming charms in place on the field. Anakin still took joy in casting Patronus charms at dementors. And flying at night when no one was there. Sometimes just him above the trees and Obi-Wan running in the woods. Then they’d go to the kitchens for hot chocolate.

Just before Christmas break Tyrannus Dooku was confirmed as the Minister of Magic. That night they all met in the Room of Requirement and just huddled up together for long hours.

He was looking forward to the break. Petro had become intolerable. So had a few other students like Riyo and Satine. They seemed hell bent on some kind of pureblood, anti-gay agenda. Anakin thought that more Wizarding children should really be required to read Muggle history. Even Jinx Secura, a 7th year Hufflepuff, was giving Obi-Wan a hard time.

Padmé pulled rank as Head Girl and made sure anyone spewing such nonsense got docked massive
quantities of House points. She kissed Palo when he threw a jelly leg curse at Petro, who was
mocking Sola.

As Winter Break hit, Anakin was happy to have the castle back to himself. Well, themselves. They’d
manage to keep Barriss for another winter break. She’d written a very entertaining message about
how she was needed to secure the place of the future school administration under Dooku. Anakin
couldn’t believe her parents bought it.

Anakin was looking forward to Christmas, despite everything. They once again all camped out in
Qui-Gon’s rooms. Qui-Gon and Avara shared Qui-Gon’s room. Everyone else unrolled sleeping
mats on the floor.

As everyone was drifting off, Obi-Wan nodded to his room. Anakin followed silently. They both
climbed into the small bed.

“We have to separate before Qui-Gon gets up,” Obi-Wan whispered.

Anakin nodded and kissed him. It was amazing to have Obi-Wan so close. Neither of them were
particularly experienced, and they put up a silencing charm to be safe, but it was still perfect. Anakin
felt like electricity was running through him. He and Obi-Wan couldn’t keep their hands off each
other. Their shirts were gone and Anakin ran his hands through Obi-Wan’s hair, bring them down
his back, nails lightly skimming skin. Obi-Wan kissed him fiercely, moaning a bit. Or maybe that
was Anakin.

It wasn’t perfect but it was them. They kissed and touched and let their happiness sing through their
bond. Anakin was less than pleased when he had to sneak back onto the couch, but Obi-Wan kissed
him thoroughly in apology.

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Christmas morning was a joy as always. Anakin got Qui-Gon a book on Irish Wolf Hounds. Qui-
Gon got him a book on the the multicultural histories of Animagi throughout the world. Padmé got
them all O.W.L. guides and candy. Barriss and Sola exchanged gifts privately. Padmé said she and
Palo would be doing the same when he got back. Ahsoka and Barriss got each other toy snitches,
and Anakin got Ahsoka a bracelet with a cat’s paw imprint on it. She got Anakin a top of the line
knife kit for potions. Anakin also made sure to get Avara a huge bag of her favorite tea.

Before dinner, in one of the many empty classrooms of Hogwarts, Anakin gave Obi-Wan his gift.
He was incredibly nervous that it would be too much. It was a slim, hand bound book with only a
few pages. On the front in neat font it said “Family”. It had pictures of Obi-Wan’s parents, at their
wedding, holding a tiny Obi-Wan. And pictures of Anakin’s. His mother laughing into his father’s
tall embrace. One of Shmi holding an infant Anakin, looking sad but proud. Then there pictures of
them. Some of just Obi-Wan and Anakin. But more of all of them. There was one of Obi-Wan at
their home, chasing Artoo of a counter top while Qui-Gon laughed. Owen hugging Anakin, both of
them covered in engine grease. One of Qui-Gon hugging Obi-Wan after he’d finished his O.W.L.S.
Ones of Anakin, Ahsoka, and Barriss making ridiculous faces, impromptu Quidditch games,
snowball fights in the courtyard. Anakin posing with Threepio. Dueling matches, cheering together
from the stands. Sola and Barriss talking quietly near the lake. Even one of Ezra holding his fingers
at Kanan’s mouth, forcing the older boy to smile.

“I mean, I understand if it’s too much. I made copies of the pictures so if you don’t want it it’s not
like I ruined the originals. I just thought-mmmf!”

Obi-Wan was kissing him. “It’s perfect, love.” The Hufflepuff said. “It’s the best gift I’ve ever
gotten.” And then he was kissing Anakin again.

Anakin had to pull away. “We’re going to be late for dinner.”

“Wait, your present.” Obi-Wan said and pulled a small box out of his robe pocket. Anakin opened it. It was a necklace. It had a fine chain and ended in a fang, coated with black gold. It was beautiful.

“It was mum’s.” Obi-Wan said quietly. “She uh, she loved wolves. So did her mum. But this is supposed to be a protection totem. The fang of a wolf, not murdered but found, blessed by generations of Kenobis.” Obi-Wan clasped it around Anakin’s neck and Anakin hugged him. “It’s amazing and thank you. I’ll never take it off.” They kissed happily for a few more minutes before heading down for dinner.

“Someone was busy,” Ahsoka grinned as they took their seats.

“You’d be busy too if Rex didn’t have to do home for break,” Anakin said, not unkindly.

“Yeah,” the Gryffindor girl sighed wistfully.

Christmas Dinner was usually all silly ornaments and Professors making jokes. Something was off this year. As dinner came to a close, the Headmaster stood. Everyone went quiet right away.

“As you know, many changes have been happening within the Ministry. As much as we would like to keep that separate from Hogwarts, we can do only so much. It is with a heavy heart that I announce that Minister Dooku has forced my hand in stepping down.” Murmurs could be heard all over the table. Yoda held his hand up. “I will leave the day before students arrive for the rest of term. Trust in your Professors here. I know all of you have worked hard and sacrificed much for Hogwarts. Unfortunately you will be asked to sacrifice more. In my place, Maketh Tua will be Headmistress. I will not abandon Hogwarts or any of you. I am not simply leaving to retire. You must trust that when you need me, when you need Hogwarts, we will be there.” The small Wizard ambled towards his office, leaving the table stunned.

“Maketh Tua?!” Padmé said. “She’s a pawn of Dooku. A corrupt government is forcing itself inside Hogwarts.” Padmé was seething.

“We’ll fight,” said Anakin. “Together. We always have and we always will.”

They went to bed that night addled. Obi-Wan thankfully accompanied Anakin into the Slytherin dorms since no one else was using them over break. They laid awake for a long time, just holding each other and thinking of what to do.

They still studied, still trained, but Anakin was dreading Tua’s arrival. Padmé had told him about her. She was a relative of Satine’s. Young and ambitious. She believed in purebloods first.

Soon enough the students were back, and at dinner that night Tua addressed them as their new Headmistress. He blond hair was pinned neatly back in a tight bun. She was slim and wearing robes that likely cost more than Qui-Gon’s house.

She said she wanted the transition to be as seamless as possible. However somethings would have to go immediately, of course. “The Rainbow Alliance is quite distasteful,” she’d said. “And proper families wouldn’t hold with such ideologies. The dueling teams as well were now dismantled. They were much too dangerous for underage students. And the mentoring program. Students needed to learn to trust in their Houses, not students from other dorms. Speaking of, the inter-House table must
go.” She banished it with the flick of a wand.

There was a lot of dissent. Even homophobic students were angry about the dueling clubs being cancelled. Professor Billaba looked murderous. She’d introduced the mentor program and it was a huge success.

Anakin was growing angrier by the second. Everything they’d worked for, and this bitch thought she was just going to undo it in fifteen minutes? He could feel Obi-Wan’s anger as well. Through their bracelets Ahsoka called an emergency meeting after dinner in the Room of Requirement.

They took their time getting there, making sure they weren’t caught or followed.

“I can’t believe this!” Padmé was livid.

“I know. We’ve worked for years to make Hogwarts a better school! This bitch can’t just come in and take it.” Ahsoka was fuming.

“That bitch has the backing of the Minister.” Obi-Wan said.

“She cancelled dueling because Dooku and the Dark Lord don’t want us to know how to fight. I’m sure when we took out their dementors and killed several of their cronies they weren’t pleased.” Barriss said, pacing.

“So what do we do?” asked Sola.

“Everything.” Anakin replied. “We start training students ourselves. Like we did with the Patronus Charm but more people, more skills.”

“And what about traitors? I mean if Satine or Petro got wind, they’d rat us out in a second.” Ahsoka replied.

“We’ll have to think of a system,” said Padmé. “But I think it’s doable. Besides, we took a Vow. We have to put the school first.”

“Hey,” said “Sola, I didn’t take that Vow.”

“And?” Padmé questioned.

“I could. I could say I had a welcome address for the new Headmistress, then I could take the Vow. Maybe inspire other people.”

“It’s a really good idea, but let’s wait and see how dangerous Tua is first.” Padmé said and Sola nodded.

“I would,” said Barriss, "but gotta keep my head down until 10:05 am on May 2nd. Then my parents can’t abduct me.”

“Ok, so we’ll look for a way to organize people without bigots and pureblood types showing up. Then we’ll regroup.”

Everyone agreed and they left in ones and twos, back to their dorms.
I can't believe I'm averaging like 2 chapters a day. I just can't stop thinking about this story. Please comment as it keeps me going.
Hogwarts under Maketh Tua quickly became unbearable. The woman actually pulled Anakin aside as they were walking to Charms and asked “what the meaning of this” was. When he’d asked what she meant, she’d gestured to the Hufflepuff tie he was wearing. “It’s a trend to wear ties of friends or partners.” He’d said slowly, as though explaining to a child. At dinner she announced that tie swapping was expressly forbidden as it violated the new dress code. Anakin sighed. It would be another several days before he could meet with his friends in the Room of Requirement.

In the meantime he studied and went to Quidditch practice. Two days later he’d been holding hands with Obi-Wan on the way to lunch and stopped by Tua once again. “No unseemly or unnatural relationships on Hogwarts grounds!” She’d said. Obi-Wan asked how anything that happened within nature could be considered unnatural. She’d docked ten points from each of them and given them detention. Separately.

When they reconvened in the Room of Requirement, Padmé had come to a conclusion. “She’s not as dangerous as she thinks she is. She’s a bitch, but her claws aren’t too sharp. Dress codes, dueling bans, it’s all ridiculous but if we head her off soon enough, we can prevent her from becoming a real threat. And listen. My mom has been doing a lot of work to get the ministry to back off and give the centaurs more land. Tua and her ilk have been fighting that. They’ve also been fighting the bans on teaching certain kinds of dark magic. Tua is spread thin. That means we could overwhelm her, and if we’re careful, get away with a lot under her nose.”

“So we don’t think she’s dangerous enough to start banning students.” Sola said.

“No,” said Padmé. “She’s still got too much opposition in the Wizengamot. And her camp still hasn’t presented a viable alternative to Azkaban.”

“I have news on the crystal,” said Barriss. “It was cursed, as we know, but not how we suspected. It was intended to send the person who touched it into a catatonic state, but only if that person wasn’t Anakin.”

“Wait,” said Anakin. “Why would someone send a random student with a crystal knowing that it could hurt that student? And what do they want me to do with it?”

“I don’t know,” said Barriss. “But the crystal is being held at the ministry now, in the Department of Mysteries.”

“So if we want it...we what, break in?”

“Yes,” Barriss said. “Well, you all break in. I’m effectively on probation.”

“How are we supposed to do that?” Obi-Wan asked. “The ministry building is in London.”

“Anakin and I could fly there,” Padmé suggested.

“Without us? Not likely.” Obi-Wan said firmly.

“There are multiple ways to fly,” Anakin suggested. “The thestrals. Tons of people can’t see them, and they’d be perfect for flying at night.”
“That could work,” said Ahsoka. “But how would we get in. We don’t even know where the Department of Ministries is.”

“I do,” Padmé said. “I’ve had to go to the Ministry with mum and dad more times than I can count. It’s the top floor. Can only be accessed by the floor beneath it.”

“Okay, say we take the thestrals and get to London. How do we get in?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Guards have five hour shifts. Give me a little more time, but if we caught them towards the beginning of a shift, we could incapacitate them.”

“That assumes we’re already in the building. How do we physically get in?” Anakin countered.

Surprisingly, it was Sola who had the answer. “Polyjuice,” she said. “Anakin could brew it. Padmé and I tell dad we want to revisit the Ministry because we’re thinking so much about our futures. Padmé finds the schedules, I get the hairs, Anakin and Ahsoka make the potion. Obi-Wan and Ahsoka are guards, while Anakin and Padmé go find the crystal. It only gives us a two hour window but it’ll have to work. Barriss and I stay here to provide alibis and a distraction for Tua if needed.”

“Sola, you are a deviate genius and the love of my life,” Barriss said, hugging her girlfriend tightly. Sola blushed furiously.

“And what about training students?” Anakin asked.

“Actually, I may have a suggestion for that,” Obi-Wan said. “We start with a diversion, to weed out people like Riyo and Petro. Something off campus on a Hogsmeade weekend. Qui-Gon’s good friends with the tavern owner on the edge of town, the Cevicignis Tavern. He’s an old pureblood, but a bit of a radical. Qui-Gon could say he’s taking a few of us out there to hear the old man lecture on Wizarding art. We could hand out flyers, but the flyers would cause the eyebrows to fall off anyone who would snitch.”

“And it’s so convoluted that they wouldn’t put the two together. Flyers will also be going out about Valentine’s fundraisers. That’s brilliant!” Anakin kissed Obi-Wan on the cheek.

“Once we had a solid group, we could use the room of requirement.” Obi-Wan continued.

“We’d need a way to communicate with the group. Something simpler than our bracelets.” Ahsoka said, thinking. “Charmed knuts! They vibrate a bit when we have a meeting. That would be doable and inconspicuous.”

“Tua is going to seriously regret ever coming to Hogwarts,” Padmé said darkly.

Ahsoka charmed a few dozen knuts, and the next weekend Sola and Padmé visited the ministry with their father.

Qui-Gon talked to his friend at the tavern and gave the all clear. He even presented a case for the optional field trip to Tua in order for students to learn about the “proper roots” of art. She was pleasantly surprised at his initiative.

Riyo and some of her friends had started a fundraiser to “match” students to their ideal Valentines, so papers and flyers were already circulating widely when Obi-Wan had a bunch printed up for the Hogsmeade “art lecture”. He even asked Tyzen and Daara to practice their eyebrow removing jinxes on some random students for fun. He’d been friendly with Daara for years and knew he could trust
The flyers went out on Thursday to hear the tavern owner, Adrian Arcus, present on Wizarding art the following weekend.

More people lost eyebrows than expected, slightly less than a quarter of the class but it was just as well. After the bigots had been rooted out, he and Ahsoka approached the rest of the Third and up years with the Charmed knuts. Usually in groups of one or two. They told them the Ministry didn’t want them to defend themselves, but they were going to learn. (The fact that students were bored stiff with their new theory-only classes helped a lot.) They told them they didn’t have to come, but if they told anyone, there would be serious repercussions. Ahsoka found a hex that made one’s genitals zing painfully, and she swore they’d lose vital part of their anatomy if they snitched. However the threat was never really needed. Most students hated Tua and Dooku. They weren’t stupid either. They knew things were going to get worse before they got better.

Padmé and Sola returned from their trip late Sunday night and called a meeting. Padmé had obtained guard schedules, and Sola had obtained hair from two guards. They were day shift guards, but they could lie easily enough.

Anakin and Ahsoka set to brewing the Polyjuice Potion. It would take a few days so they had to wait. On Thursday it was ready. Anakin carefully bottled two containers, adding a guard hair to each. “Shelf life is two weeks,” he said. “So best do it this weekend, Saturday after the ‘field trip’ if possible.”

They all agreed.

The day of the field trip came. All in all about twenty five students came, which wasn’t bad. Once inside, they were all given a glass of Butterbeer free of charge. “You young ones risking hide and hair for what’s right is no small thing,” Adrian told them as he and Qui-Gon stood at the front of the closed tavern. Qui-Gon thanked him again for his time and the space. “I know you can’t meet here often, too many eyes in Hogsmeade. But I know the need for neutral ground.” He sat and Qui-Gon gestured for Anakin to stand.

He faced his classmates. “We know that what Tua is doing is wrong. Not just the homophobia or the pureblood racism, but all of it. Destroying the inter-House ties we built. Trying to tell us who can be friends with, who we can love. That’s not why Hogwarts was built. It was a refuge from Muggles and their persecution of all things different than them. We aim to keep it a refuge, and one that we can defend. So the six of us, me, Obi-Wan, Padmé, Sola, Ahsoka, and Barriss, want to fight back. The dueling clubs have been cancelled but we plan to teach ourselves and each other. We have a few teachers that will help us,” he gestured to Qui-Gon, “but they can’t be there all the time. We’ve always relied on each other, and we have to keep doing that now.”

“So what are you saying?” asked Kat Ooni.

“I’m saying we meet regularly. We train. Like a secret dueling club, if that helps. We have a place inside the castle that’s safe. Four of us took Unbreakable Vows to defend this school years ago, and we mean to stand by them. Right now that means making sure Hogwarts students can defend themselves.”

“Let’s do it!” cried Sabine Wren from the back, followed by cheers.
“The knuts we gave you will vibrate a bit 30 minutes before there’s a session going on. And you can’t tell anyone. Obi-Wan and Ahsoka carefully vetted people for this. If there’s someone you want to bring in, you ask us first. We can’t allow homophobia, pureblood rhetoric, or any of that in here. Understood?”

Everyone nodded. Obi-Wan spoke up. “Excellent. If you saw someone’s eyebrows fall off this week, it meant they’re either anti-gay or pro-pureblood. So be careful. We’re asking all of you to take an oath today. Not an Unbreakable one, but one that will have very nasty repercussions. Ready?” Twenty-five heads nodded.

The oath wasn’t complicated, but Anakin, Ahsoka, Padmé, and Barriss kept a careful eye on the room to make sure everyone complied. Everyone swore to keep the training a secret, on pain of boils and loss of hair if they didn’t. It was Kat who suggested they needed a name.

There was some back and forth about it before Ahsoka suggested “Lumos Imperius”. Given Yoda’s speech at Christmas, it felt right.

The group headed back to the castle in the frigid weather, feeling more hopeful than they had since Yoda had left.

Anakin double checked that he had the Polyjuice potions. Most students were getting into bed but he, Ahsoka, Obi-Wan, and Padmé were getting ready to commandeer some thestrals. Barriss would be in the Common Room, then would stay in the library as late as she could with Palo and Rex. She’d say she’d seen Anakin and Obi-Wan run off for a date if anything went south.

Anakin was trying not to jump out of his skin. His father had worked in the Department of Mysteries, and now he’d have to go in there and a find a crystal meant for him. He felt Obi-Wan’s calm against his mind like a balm.

They made it outside, and around the back part of the castle where Obi-Wan knew the thestrals were kept.

“I’ve never seen them before, they’re strangely beautiful,” Padmé said. Anakin had nearly forgotten she’d seen death in battle now.

“They are,” said Sola, reaching up to pet one. It nuzzled at her affectionately.

Alright, we don’t have time to find saddles, so we should be off,” Obi-Wan said. Padmé helped Sola onto one of the tall horse-like beasts and Anakin helped Obi-Wan up, followed by Ahsoka. Obi-Wan had bribed all three beasts with raw meat of some kind. The Hufflepuff gave a gentle kick and they were off. Padmé and Anakin changed into their bird forms and flew side by side with them.

“It’s so beautiful up here at night,” Sola was saying. “This is what you get to see every time you fly?” Padmé let out a gentle noise. Anakin landed on Obi-Wan’s thestral, and Obi-Wan stroked his feathers.

It took about three hours but they made it. They’d have to work fast to get back before breakfast. And get out before the Polyjuice wore off. They tied the thestrals behind some trees, hoping they’d stay unnoticed. Obi-Wan gave them more of...whatever it was he was carrying in a sack. Anakin didn’t want to know. It was a little past midnight, but the Ministry wasn’t closed. There were still Goblins and a few humans working late. Anakin and Padmé flew up to the third floor window, while Obi-Wan and Sola took the Polyjuice potion below. Ahsoka would stay with the thestrals and send an alarm if anything went wrong on the ground.
Anakin felt Obi-Wan’s revulsion at the potion. But it worked. He and Sola, wearing guard uniforms she’d liberated the previous weekend, made their way to the third floor unaccosted. Sola had an excellent memory so there was no fumbling around or going off in wrong directions.

In less than twenty minutes they had opened a window and Padmé and Anakin were in. Once more human, Obi-Wan and Sola held their guard positions as Padmé guided Anakin up into the Department of Mysteries. The elevator dinged and the walked out into a room full of crystal balls, some of them whispering. There were archways that led to to nowhere but gave Anakin horrible feelings. The crystal. He had to focus on the crystal. He opened his magic up to it, tried to let himself find it. He was moving along the room, dodging and weaving through rows of crystal balls and scrolls. Finally he stopped. He pulled the dragonhide bag he’d brought with him out, also slipping on his dragonhide gloves. There was a shallow bin on a shelf. It was there, he could feel it. “One hour of Polyjuice left,” Padmé said.

Anakin reached in, careful to only touch the crystal. It was a brilliant aquamarine color, maybe five inches long. He tucked it into his bag and nodded at Padmé. They were making their way back to the elevator when something else stopped him. A whisper from one of the smaller orbs. A man’s whisper. “Anakin,” it said quietly. He turned towards it.

“What are you doing? We have to go!” Padmé hissed.

This was his. Even more than the crystal. This particular orb, only a bit larger than a snitch, absolutely belonged to him. He grabbed it quickly. Then felt a change in the magic around him. An alarm. Shit.

“Run!” he told Padmé. They met Sola, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan below, but there wasn’t time to explain. Anakin pushed the window open told them all to jump, casting a feather-light curse as Padmé had the good sense to charm the window shut behind them. They could hear actual guards running up to the Department of Mysteries.

They hit the ground and made for the thestrals. Anakin gave his bag, containing crystal and orb, to Obi-Wan. Seconds later three thestrals and two large birds were in the air. They were half way back before they were sure no one was coming after them. Padmé transformed and sat behind Sola, gesturing for Anakin to do the same. He wrapped his arms around Obi-Wan.

“What the hell were you thinking?” Padmé practically yelled.

“I don’t know! It called to me! I don’t know how I know but it was my father’s voice! I had to.”

Padmé hung her head. “Well at least we weren’t caught. Yet. Whatever that orb is, someone really didn’t want it taken. We better get these thestrals back before Professor Fisto realizes they’re missing. And hope no one asked questions about where we were.”

“You think your father left a message for you?” Obi-Wan asked.

“I don’t know. But he worked in that Department. Maybe he did.” Obi-Wan kissed his knuckles and Anakin smiled.

Once back at Hogwarts and having tied the thestrals back up, the group broke off into pairs to get back to their dorms. It was nearly four in the morning. Thankfully tomorrow was a Sunday. Anakin and Obi-Wan made it back with no problems. Which really said something about Hogwarts security, according to Anakin, but it worked for him this time around.

Only Padmé was caught. And by Tua. She handled it well though, saying she was having so much
anxiety over loving her sister but trying to make her understand that she had a duty as an Amidala to find a husband. Tua had been very forgiving when Padmé had made her doe eyes as large as possible and even let a tear slip loose.

Anakin slept until noon. It was glorious. He was curious about the items he’d acquired but he was also extremely hungry.

He’d hidden them carefully, under multiple curses in his trunk before opening his curtains.

The only person in the room was Petro, who seemed to be waiting for him.

“Don’t think I don’t know what you were doing last night,” the boy sneered.

“And what was that?” Anakin asked, a weight in his stomach.

“Sneaking off with that Hufflepuff. You will get caught one of these days.”

“It’s not the 1700s. It’s not illegal to be gay,” Anakin replied with an annoyed yawn.

“No, but with Dooku in power things will go back to how they should be.”

“Doesn’t it ever just tire you out?” Anakin asked honestly. “The amount of energy you spend on just being a little shit ALL the time these days? How do you make it through classes?”

Petro pulled his wand and Anakin didn’t even bother reaching for his. He pushed out with the magic, pinning Petro to the far wall effortlessly. “Don’t.” Anakin said with finality. “I am stronger than you. I am smarter than you. And I have better friends than you. If the day comes when you get tired of getting off by looking down on other people, we can talk. Until then, you leave me and my friends alone.” He let Petro drop. Then he headed off for a long shower. The Prefects baths were quite nice.

When he finally made it to lunch he borrowed Barriss’ Daily Prophet. A break in at the Ministry had been reported, but no mentions of which department or what might have been taken. Hm, he thought. Must mean they really don’t want people to know what they were keeping, or that it was gone.

He was walking with Barriss to the library, and they passed Riyo hawking Valentine’s matches. She looked like she had a snide comment ready for them. They both must have given her the same matching glare because she looked down and away from them instead. He and Barriss studied for Charms all afternoon before taking a break and coming back with Ahsoka for Transfigurations.

The next day was Monday, and a Room of Requirement meeting day. Anakin brought his dragon hide bag.

“So, looks like our mission was accomplished.” Ahsoka said happily.

“Aside from Anakin setting off an alarm,” Padmé said fondly.

“What was that about, anyway?” They Gryffindor asked.

Anakin reached into his bag with a gloved hand and pulled out the orb.

It was mostly clear but had light mist swirling in it. He could still hear it faintly whispering. He
wasn’t sure what he was supposed to do. He reached his ungloved hand towards it.

Suddenly he wasn’t in the Room of Requirement. He was in the Department of Mysteries but it was older. There was a man standing in front of him, who actually looked a lot like Anakin except older. It was his father, the spitting image of the man, Lucan Skywalker, who’d been pictured holding his mother. Except this man was alive. He couldn’t seem to see Anakin, but he was talking to someone, another man. A much younger Mace Windu by the looks of it.

“The prophecy can’t be known. We have to keep it away from him, Mace.” His father was saying.

“I know. But his followers are everywhere. I’ll try and keep it safe. I just need some time.” Mace left the room and a woman entered it. She bore a resemblance to Luminara and Barriss.

“Keeping secrets again, Lucan?” She asked with a cruel smirk.

“Always so fast to make accusations, Kah.” His father said evasively as he put the orb in a vault.

“Undulis are just curious. But if you have a new prophecy, it is required you make your supervisors aware of it. And oh look, that supervisor would be me.”

“There is no new prophecy. Not yet. These things take time. Now if you’ll excuse me, I’m going home to my wife.”

“Ah yes, another Skywalker on the way. Charming.” His father left but Kah Unduli did not. She unlocked the vault with a series of curses, removing the orb. Then Anakin heard what it had to say.

“The Child Born as the Lion Rises Will Wield the Power of the Sun and the Secrets of the Moon. He Will Unite the Four, the Avatars, the Elements, and Balance Will Be Brought. His Sigil Will be the Raven, Walker of Skies. His Mate the Wolf, Protector of Pack. And he Will Unify the Wisdom, Loyalty, Ambition, and Courage of All Set Before Him. No Darkness or Light Will Control him, but All Will Yield.”

Kah Unduli looked shocked. Scared, almost. She clutched the Orb and left with it. Anakin was back in the Room of Requirement.

Anakin was stunned. Looking at his friends, so where they. “Did you all hear that?” He asked.

Nods all around. “Even the parts with my dad?”

“No, that part was more like a pensieve, only you could hear that,” Padmé said. “But we all heard the Prophecy. You were right, it was important that you take it. And no wonder Dooku didn’t want you to have it.”

“I’m supposed to do all of that?” He said skeptically.

“Duh, SkyGuy, you’ve already done a lot of it. We took Unbreakable Vows our first year, and we wouldn’t have without you.”

“You changed Slytherin’s reputation in less than four years,” Obi-Wan smiled at him. “And you called the Angfinitum to you.”

“Does that make you my wolf?” Anakin smiled back.

“If you’re my raven,” Obi-Wan growled and made to bite at Anakin’s neck.

Anakin smiled then turned serious. “Kah Offee was there. I think she’s the one who turned the
“prophecy over to Palpatine.”

“My aunt,” Barriss ground out murderously.

Obi-Wan hugged him.

“What about the crystal?” Sola asked.

Anakin reached for it with a gloved hand, the touched with one ungloved finger. Held it in his hand. A green light emitted softly, then ran the length of the crystal, remaining there as if it had always been part of it. Anakin watched mesmerized. “What do you think that means?” He asked, suddenly tired. Learning about his father and the prophecy was a lot.

"I don't know," Padme said. "But we'll figure it out as soon as we can."

Meeting dispersed, Anakin walked back towards the Slytherin dorm with Obi-Wan. He would have held his hand but he was so tired, and not in the mood to deal with Tua. Someone had plastered completely tacky paper hearts outside the dorm entrance. Anakin hugged his boyfriend. “For Valentine’s Day, can we just not do anything except bring some food to the Room of Requirement and spend the whole day there alone?”

Obi-Wan kissed the top of his head. “Of course we can.”

Anakin entered his dorm, re-secured his bag, and curled up with Artoo, sensing Threepio under the the bed on her heated rocks. He dreamed about his parents, about his father walking the halls of the Ministry, tall and imposing, and his mother, investigating the site of her own husband’s murder.

Chapter End Notes

Yay for heists! But what the hell is that crystal about? Tua would be easier to deal with if she were like most republican politicians and would just get caught having sex with someone of the same gender in a public restroom.
Valentine’s Day passed with many people boycotting Riyo’s matching fundraiser, but several still participated. Anakin and Obi-Wan decided to meet with Barriss and Ahsoka after classes for research about crystals. Anakin got to the library first and was re-shouldering his bag when Obi-Wan came up next to him. The auburn-haired boy was blushing.

“Did you run here?” Anakin questioned.

“No. I know you hate Valentine’s Day and it is totally stupid, but here.” Obi-Wan awkwardly shoved a small stuffed wolf into Anakin’s hands. Anakin was sure the grin on his face made him look like an idiot but he didn’t care.

“It’s even a Eurasian wolf, like you.” He kissed Obi-Wan lightly. “And Valentine’s is the worst, but you’re kinda the best so, here.” Anakin held out his hand, offering up a Slytherin tie that Sola had showed him how to cut and sew in a a bracelet. A manly bracelet at that, he was assured. Obi-Wan looked around before kissing Anakin again, and then they headed into the library.

“For two people who hate this holiday, you look awfully happy,” Ahsoka teased.

“So that pendant under your shirt was a gift to yourself?” Anakin asked.

“Rex has got to slow down with the jewelry. A girl can only wear so much,” she said fondly.

They researched for hours, finding little of value. Ahsoka found something about great crystals used in old rituals but they required multiple people to hold them, otherwise the energy would overwhelm a single person and leave them dead or worse. Obi-Wan was able to identify the crystal as an aquamarine. He said it meant it was a beryl-based mineral, meaning effectively a type of mutation of an emerald. “Slytherins and their emeralds,” Ahsoka had rolled her eyes. Anakin didn’t blame her.

Padmé appeared and took a seat. They told her what they’d learned but it wasn’t much. It was Valentine’s Day so no one was in the library. Padmé was actually about to head out for a date with Palo. “Anakin, can I see it again?” Anakin shrugged and put on a dragon hide glove just in case. He pulled the Aquamarine crystal out. It seemed to still have it’s greenish tint. Padmé reached her hand towards it.

“What are you doing?” Anakin nearly yelled.

“I have a theory. And I think it’s a good one. Trust me?”

Anakin nodded and laid his palm and crystal back on the table. Padmé pulled out a small magnifying glass that seemed to have several lenses in her right hand, and reached her left index finger to touch the crystal. For a moment nothing happened. Then it seemed to glow, and a darker blue streak threaded it’s way through the crystal.

“I knew it!” Padmé said triumphantly, now looking at it through her magnifying glasses and adjusting them.

“What just happened?” Anakin asked.
“Ok, I figured if the crystal and the orb about your prophecy were in the same place, they might be related in purpose. And then I thought about your Angfinitum and my spear. I mean the prophecy wasn’t really just about you was it? It was likely about all of us. You’d already touched it so it wasn’t going to respond to you again. But if I’m an Heir of Ravenclaw just like you are of Slytherin, it would react to me too! And only Rowena’s Heir could use her spear.” Padmé was talking so fast it was hard to keep up, but she did have a very good point.

“And now, it’s not just a beryl composition like Obi-Wan said. It’s changed. It’s got corundum in it now, too. Corundum yields sapphires.” She was grinning like a maniac.

“So, if we all touch it, it will take on different properties, and then what?” Ahsoka asked.

“Well, I don’t think you can touch it yet. I think Heirs have to be proven before they can touch it, or they’ll end up like Kat. But I don’t know what happens when four Heirs touch it. We should research the founders and see if they shared a crystal of some kind. But, I’m almost late to meet Palo. See you tomorrow!” And she was gone as quickly as she’d come in.

“Is that what we think? That we’re all the respective Heirs of a House?” Obi-Wan asked.

“I mean, we do have the Patroni to match,” Ahsoka said. “But what would it mean if we were?”

“Balance,” Anakin said. “Protecting the magical world without letting the Dark like Dooku overrun it.”

They were all silent for a moment, thinking of the implications.

“If I prove myself an Heir, can I not take O.W.L.s?” Ahsoka asked. They laughed and resumed their easy research silence.

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March at Hogwarts was dreary. Some days the snow seemed to want to melt, other days it piled on. Hufflepuff beat Slytherin a close Quidditch match and at least once every couple weeks they tried to make sure to have dueling practice in the Room of Requirement.

Tua started informing teachers to give detentions for the most minor things. Tie swapping, same gender hand holding (even two first year Gryffindor sisters had been given detention for holding hands) and using any magic outside of spells and potions assigned in text books. The fact that no other professors would do any such thing annoyed her to no end. The number of Dementors about campus doubled, and anyone who complained was punished for not understanding the importance of safety. (If heard by Tua or one of her rats like Petro or Riyo.)

In mid March Cody and a few other students approached Anakin and Obi-Wan in the Room of Requirement after practice. Sola and Barriss were there, so was Kat, Bant, Wedge, and about seven other people Anakin couldn’t place off the top of his head. Barriss, unsurprisingly, lead the charge.

“We want all this anti-queer bigotry gone. This is our school, not the Ministry’s. And we have a plan.”

Anakin and Obi-Wan listened, then talked it over with Padmé and Ahsoka. In late March, when they reconvened after another dueling practice, they agreed. Padmé would take point since Tua trusted her. Cody, Rex, and Ahsoka would get supplies, and Anakin and Obi-Wan would get the brooms. Sola would make the shirts and perfect the Charms. Obi-Wan would also work with Wedge, Anakin, and Bant on the acoustics needed. It would take place at dinner that Thursday night, when Dooku would be visiting to check up on Tua’s performance. Press would be there as well. They dispersed
much happier than they’d come in, their tasks set before them.

On Thursday, everyone in the Rainbow Coalition was trying very hard to suppress nervous smiles and giggles. Dinner would be in an hour, and Anakin and Bant had confirmed the sound system. Honestly, he should consider keeping in touch with her after graduation. They could make money in magic-tech collaborations. Wedge had kept the hall clear, and all they had to do was wait. And get into costume.

Anakin had commandeered 10 brooms. Some privately owned, some from the school. Sola had come through beautifully. They all had loud shirts under their buttoned up robes, in various colors of the rainbow. Some were even wearing full rainbows on their shirts. Students were filing into the Hall for dinner. The ceiling was reflecting a dreary evening. This would certainly liven things up. Anakin caught sight of Dooku at the head table. Nearly everyone had taken their seats, Padmé included. Sola doused them all with glitter charms, a different color for every rider. Their brooms were also charmed to trail massive amounts of glitter. Hogwarts would have glitter for the next 100 years.

Tua rose and gave a speech, seeming unconcerned with a few missing students. Then she welcomed “Head Girl, Padmé Amidala” to the stage, to talk about the “wonderful progress Hogwarts had made in recent months.” Anakin shed his robe and mounted his broom, everyone behind him following suit. They were so close.

Padmé demurely took her place in front of the microphone. “I know that change is difficult for everyone,” she started, “but some changes require growing pains that make us all stronger in the end.” Tua was eating it up with a spoon. “But some changes would seek to make us cut ourselves down, to be different than what we are. More presentable. More palatable for the lowest common denominator.” Padmé smiled her scary smile. “And those are changes we cannot abide. We are who we are. We are Hogwarts, and we are proud!” She shed her robe, revealing a black shirt with bright rainbow splotches painted across it. She then Accio’d her broom. From the Ravenclaw table Bant started the music. Anakin pushed off, felt the ten students behind him, including Obi-Wan, do the same. The flew through the Great Hall, leaving obscene amounts of glitter in their wake. They looped and dodged each other, setting off fireworks here and there.

It was chaos. It was rainbow madness. And Anakin loved it. He felt Obi-Wan’s elation too. Bant and Wedge had picked the song, so as “Born this Way” blared across the Great Hall, Anakin and the Rainbow Coalition dropped small rainbow flags, buttons saying “gay is the new hetero” and “witches are not just baby makers”. Padmé had made a whole set of “my uterus, my business” buttons. Dooku looked furious. Obi-Wan noticed and made sure he got plenty of pink glitter. As the song neared its end, Barriss, who’d sat properly at dinner, discreetly aimed her wand and with a slight wave, a giant banner appeared over the Great Hall. In huge letters, lots of colors, and many languages, it said “LOVE WINS”. They made their exit, using multiple windows and soaring into the freezing night in t shirts. They had considered concealing their faces, but in the end figured that hiding was what people had always wanted people who were different to do. Using side entrances and windows, students made it back to their dorms. They figured they had time to kill while Tua tried to calm Dooku and the press. Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, and Padmé came back to the Slytherin dorm with him.

They couldn’t stop laughing. They knew there’d be hell to pay, but god, they could have to scrub bathroom floors with toothbrushes for the rest of their academic careers and it would have been worth it.
The next morning was almost as chaotic as the night before. Howlers were sent, threats were made, “traditional” students threatened to beat the “queer muggle nonsense” out of younger students. Retaliatory threats were made. And the Prophet. Wow, they got front page, and in color, too. Images of students on brooms circled under a headline, “Is the Magical World Homophobic?”

No punishments were given out that day. Nor the weekend. By the following Thursday, Anakin was nervous. Padmé had assured them that expelling students because of sexual orientation was still illegal, but the silence was eerie.

Finally on Friday Tua approached Anakin with a deceptively pleasant smile on her face. “You will meet me tomorrow evening at 5pm. Outside the chamber guarded by the portrait of the Spanish Inquisition.” That was a low blow. Take him to the room he’d been tortured in as a First Year. Anakin nodded.

Obi-Wan and Ahsoka had been given the same meeting time, as had Padmé, Sola, Cody, and Rex.

Gathering in front of the portrait, they waited for Tua. “What d’ya reckon she’ll do?” Rex asked.

“I don’t know,” Padmé answered. “But she means to make an example of us. We were the most visible last Thursday, we’ll pay the steepest price.”

“Very good, Ms. Amidala,” Tua was walking down hall towards them. “I will indeed, make examples of you. You see you cost me a great deal that night. So it is my job to impress upon you why our new rules are the only way for magical society to go forward.” She stood to move in front of the portrait. “You see, getting too close to muggles and their little libertine ideas has degraded the fundamentals of what Wizarding society should be. Half-bloods, and even lesser creatures than they have been allowed to infiltrate our institutions.” Anakin could practically hear Ahsoka bite her tongue. “There are reasons we are the way we are. Very good ones. But ah, younger generations have been raised with such leniency that you can no longer tell wrong from right. It’s not entirely your fault.” She tutted with false pity. “If we’d been carrying on properly, we wouldn’t have these dangerous convicts breaking out. We’d have order. Many of those escaped were simply trying to hold Wizarding society to its highest and most noble standards. Cull the flock, if you will.” Anakin’s blood ran cold. Was this woman actually siding with the Dark Lord so blatantly? “I know many of you are from good bloodlines. But you still clearly need to be reminded of why you must guard your heritage so preciously. Dangerous things can happen to wizards and witches who break with tradition. And I’m afraid I must show you how and why first hand.”

Anakin could sense that something wasn’t right. The chill. That chill. There were Dementors in that room! She was going to set dementors on children?! He told Obi-Wan, they made sure to have the Patronus incantation on their lips as soon as that door opened

Tua said the password and the wall opened, but there were no lights inside. Not even candles. Instead of walking in, Tua stood behind them and used a charm to push them all in at once.

Anakin had his wand out, already using a Lumos to look about. So did Obi-Wan and the others followed. Anakin spotted a dementor in the back. It seemed to be tethered, but it was trying very hard to get to them. On his left Sola screamed. A giant spider, an Acromantula was moving towards her. She panicked and ran further into the chamber and the Acromantula followed. He heard her yell 'Incendio!' followed by a Blasting Curse.

Cody cried out. A Kappa was attacking him, its hands around his throat. Rex was being stalked by a Manticore. Anakin looked back to see Obi-Wan, sobbing on the ground.

“They’re bogarts!” Padmé screamed out. “They’re not real! Use Riddikulus!”
Thank god for Padmé. She dealt with Sola’s Acromantula, and Anakin diverted the attention of the Kappa and Manticore, conjuring a box with a lock to keep them in. Obi-Wan took care of his own as soon as he realized that Qui-Gon was not in fact dead in front of him.

They seemed to be safe, except for the dementor chained to the wall. Likely meant to make them even more terrified of their bogarts. But then the dementor gained ground, it’s chain dragging against the floor.

Anakin shot off his Patronus, which annoyed it but in the small room they couldn’t get away. “I accidentally hit the chain with an Incendio,” Sola said, “before I knew it was a bogart.” Padmé and Sola also set off their Patroni, but it only slowed it down. A Patronus could deter a dementor, but not kill one. Obi-Wan’s badger attacked it, but disappeared not long after realizing it couldn’t leave.

Sola was banging on the wall they’d entered through. “Help! Please! The Dementor is free! Please, Headmistress, it’s going to kill us!”

“She can’t hear through the wall,” Padmé said, pulling her sister to her tightly. “She probably has us on a timer, and she didn’t think we’d figure out that they were bogarts so soon.” Cold fear gripped Anakin. He grasped for Obi-Wan’s hand. The dementor drew ever nearer. It was less than six feet from them.

In the dim light of their wands Anakin turned to Obi-Wan. “I love you. I think I’ve loved you since Second Year. I want you know, in case.”

Ahsoka took Anakin’s other hand. “Anakin you’re the first and best friend I’ve ever had. Obi-Wan, I love you and Padmé and Sola and Cody like family. Rex, I-I-”

“I know, me too.” He kissed the top of her head gently as he put an arm around her.

Obi-Wan felt something rise up in him. His friends, his loved ones, his Anakin, his family. NO. They would NOT die at the hands of some bigoted, idiotic, bureaucrat on a power trip. This was his family and he was a Hufflepuff. He protected his family at all costs. Their mutual loyalty was the basis of his life. He stepped forward, dropping Anakin’s hand.

“NO! YOU DO NOT GET TO HURT MY FAMILY! I WILL DIE FIRST AND TAKE YOU WITH ME!”

Obi-Wan wasn’t sure how, but he was holding something. His left hand was curled in a fist around a handle of some kind. There was a thick strap over his forearm. And suddenly he could see. He was holding a shield, and it was glowing. It got brighter and brighter, and the dementor backed away from it. Obi-Wan charged, his only thought on ending the threat to those he loved. Light emanated from the center of the shield, he directed it at the Dementor and it screamed an unholy shrill sound. Then it disintegrated, leaving only scraps of dark fabric behind.

Obi-Wan was panting, but he was alive. He couldn’t believe he had just done that. He had killed a dementor. Well the shield had, but he had certainly helped. He turned to his friends, disbelieving look on his face.

Immediately he was swarmed. People were crying happy tears. Anakin said if he ever actually sacrificed himself he’d resurrect him and murder him himself. Once everyone had calmed down, they took stock. Five bogarts contained, and one destroyed Dementor. Obi-Wan examined the shield. It was large, possibly meant to be two-handed, but comfortable enough for one arm. It wasn’t a perfect circle, but rather looked like top half was made of a larger circle and the bottom half a smaller one. In the center was a raised bronze circle with intricate designs on it. Two silver panels on either side
framed it in almost a yin-yang pattern.

“Hufflepuff’s Shield,” Anakin said quietly. “You’re the Heir of Hufflepuff.” He smiled at his boyfriend. “It came to you when you needed it.” Obi-Wan kissed Anakin soundly.

“I love you too. I just couldn’t bear saying it and thinking it would be the only time.” They embraced for long moments.

Ahsoka bowed formally. “Thank you, oh Heir of Hufflepuff, for saving our lives.”

Obi-Wan bowed back “It was my pleasure, dear lady of Gryffindor, for I too, wished to keep my soul.”

“So...you guys are like the super heroes of Hogwarts?” Cody asked.

“Nah,” said Anakin. “But we’re supposed to help protect it. With everybody else. Like we all did with the Rainbow Coalition stunt and trying to keep those monsters off the school grounds.”

“What’s Ms. Stick Up Her Ass gonna think about us killing a dementor?” Ahsoka asked.

“She’s gonna think that she’ll do anything we say,” Padmé said dangerously.

“How so?” Rex questioned.

“She just let seven students, six of them underage, in a room with a Dementor and no way out. My parents are on the Wizengamot. So is Boba Fett. Anakin and Obi-Wan are the last of major lines and under Qui-Gon Jinn’s protection. It’s negligence on her part. Negligence, that had one of us not been the Heir of a Founder, would have ended all of our lives. So she’ll grovel. She resign, saying she never should have been so stupid as to let a group of children into a room where one errant spell, which she knew would be likely given the bogarts, would destroy our souls. We may have to testify, but I’m fine with that. All of you need to contact your parents as soon as possible tonight. Preferably by fire call. Say you’re willing to testify under Veritaserum. We need to cover our bases.”

“If we spin this right, this could be a major blow against Dooku,” Anakin added. “I mean he hand picked this bitch for Headmistress. This makes a strong case for keeping the Ministry out of our school.”

“Exactly. We’ll give Tua the events as they happened, but tell her we are all refusing to discuss anything in detail until we can do so with a legal guardian.” Nods all around.

Thirty minutes or so later, which Padmé noted mentally, the door slide open. Instead of terrified students, Tua saw a group of strong and self-possessed young Witches and Wizards. And they looked furious. She cast a lighting charm in the room. When she saw the dementor was no longer there, she paled.

“Here’s what’s going to happen,” Padmé said. “We’ll give you the basic facts of what happened here. But only together. You don’t get to question anyone individually until we contact our legal guardians and they contact the Aurors, as is appropriate for this situation. And here are the facts.”

Obi-Wan stood forward, still carrying his shield. “You led seven students, six of them underage, into a dark room where you knew a dementor was chained. Chained poorly at that. Knowing that first, they’d have to face down bogarts, of whose presence they were not aware.”

“Then,” said Anakin, “You didn’t even leave a way for them to signal any real danger, relying instead on just timing the whole thing. Terribly irresponsible.”
Ahsoka moved forward. “Knowing that the Dementor was only marginally restrained, and not knowing how the bogarts would manifest or if or when we’d realize they were bogarts, a girl running from what she thought was an Acromantula fired an Incendio, which released the dementor.”

Tua looked like she might faint.

Rex spoke next. “The students, who were terrified that they were in their last moments, huddled together. Until one of them, enraged at the injustice of the situation, moved.”

Cody finished it up. “Obi-Wan approached the Dementor, screaming that it would not hurt his family, and a shield appeared upon his arm. The Shield of Hufflepuff. Which when Obi-Wan attacked, turned the Dementor into confetti. So you can also explain to the Ministry why one of their Dementors is missing.”

“And that’s all we’re saying until we can consult with our legal guardians and the authorities.” Padmé finished. “We owe you nothing until those conditions are met. Any attempt to infringe on our legal rights will be met with great hostility. We are returning to our dorms for the night, and you will not seek contact with us of any kind.” And Padmé let them out of the dungeons.

That night Obi-Wan stayed in Anakin’s bed. Petro could deal with it. They’d almost lost each other. Sola made her way to the girls’ Slytherin dorms as well.

Chapter End Notes

I'll updated The Middle Path next, promise.
Cody and Rex were waiting the next day by the main entrance to Hogwarts. Their father was walking up the path. They were very glad that his current mood wasn’t directed towards them. Padmé and Sola were already inside with their parents, sitting at one of the tables and talking quietly. Qui-Gon was a few yards up from them, with Obi-Wan, Anakin, and Anakin’s cousin Owen. Ahsoka was sitting with her mother at the Gryffindor table and the two were embracing tightly.

Rex and Cody had already told their father what had happened during their firecall, but they went over it again. When they were done, Boba Fett hugged his boys closely. Padmé’s mother, Sio, stood, and gathered the students and their guardians. “If it’s alright with you all, I’d like to take charge of this case. I’ve been scholar of Wizengamot law for some years, and I’ve drawn up a list of charges we should pursue.” She handed out copies to everyone.

Anakin took a look. Negligence, Negligence with the Intent to Kill, Endangerment of Minors, Cruel and Unusual Punishment, and Manslaughter.

Qui-Gon raised his eyebrows. “I’ve been studying Muggle Law for some time as well,” Mrs. Amidala said. “I’ve made some strides where I can.”

“I have no problem with you taking the lead on this,” Qui-Gon said. The other guardians agreed.

“Ms. Tua wanted to have her representation be Minister Dooku, but I pointed out that was illegal. I don’t know who she’s chosen, but be prepared.”

The group ascended the stairs. Tua was sitting behind her desk, and standing behind her was a man Anakin didn’t recognize. “Saeko Bonteri,” Padmé whispered. Anakin would have to ask Lux about the man later.

The discussion was brief. The list of charges being pursued was read, and Tua said nothing in her defense. Bonteri argued against the charges of Negligence with Intent and Manslaughter, but Sio held her ground, citing precedents and reminding Bonteri that his client was in no position to barter for anything. Sio and Bonteri left for the Ministry to set a court date before the Wizengamot, and everyone else filed back into the Great Hall.

Owen held Anakin by the shoulders gently. “Are you sure you want to stay here? With a Headmistress who almost killed children? Say the word and I’ll take you home. I’m sure there are other schools for magic.”

Anakin smiled. “No, I belong here. We all do. We’ve proven we can fight them and protect our school.”

“And each other,” Obi-Wan said, coming up and squeezing Anakin’s hand. Owen smiled.

“So this is the young man I’ve been hearing so much about. Nice to finally meet you, Obi-Wan.” He extended his hand and Obi-Wan took it.

“You too, sir.”

“Hah. Don’t call me sir. Just Owen is fine. And you must be Ahsoka.” He said as she and Ashla
approached. Ahsoka smiled and nodded.

“Well, it seems we’ve certainly all got work cut out for us,” Qui-Gon said. “The trial will not be quick or easy. I will imagine that all of you will be asked to testify under Veritaserum.”

Ruwee Amidala, Padmé and Sola’s father, spoke. “Yes, I think our children have proven they can handle just about anything. Basilisks, destroying Dementors,” he looked around. “I know you’re all very young, but I sense the power in you. You’ll do great things soon. Greater than you have now.”

“All we did was survive,” Rex said jokingly.

“Against seven bogarts and a Dementor in a dark, locked room? Many wizards in their prime couldn’t do that. And Padmé told me, about the relics. The Angfinitum, Rowena’s Spear, The Aegis of Hufflepuff. It will all come out in the trial. But don’t fret. There will be people who want to doubt you, but more who will believe you. And you’ll give them hope that Dooku and his ilk can be fought against, and that hope will spread. I know it’s a lot to put on such young shoulders, but you’ll be just fine.”


“I know, sweetheart. It’s what dads do. Now, where’s this young lady of yours? I’d quite like to meet her.” Sola blushed and swiped a finger over her bracelet. Soon Barriss was there, looking uncharacteristically shy.

Ruwee approached here. “I hear you and my daughter have been seeing each other for quite some time. I apologize for not reaching out sooner. It’s wonderful to meet you. Anyone who makes Sola so happy is someone I’m also glad to meet.” He hugged her, and Barriss looked for all of two seconds like she might cry in relief. But she regained her composure.

“Thank you sir, it’s an honor to meet you as well.”

“Ah, please, call me Ruwee. Palo does. Also, you’re welcome at our home anytime. I understand that familial expectations can be quite burdensome, but I also hear you’ll be of legal age soon. So if you’d like to stay with us for the summer, we’d be happy to have you. Now I’m terribly sorry, but I must get to a meeting.” He hugged his daughters and Barriss again, then headed out to the edge of the grounds apparated.

It was an ugly, overcast Saturday but Anakin was hopeful. Ahsoka and Ashla were talking to Boba and Rex, and Owen was asking Cody about what Quidditch was. Qui-Gon and Avara were speaking quietly.

Boba Fett left not long after Ruwee. He was an Auror after all and had to get back to work. Ashla hugged all children present and told them to firecall her if they needed anything. Then she headed off to St. Mungo’s to finish her shift.

That left Owen, Qui-Gon and Avara. Owen thanked Qui-Gon for everything he had done. The summers, the guidance, he said he would have had no idea what to do. Qui-Gon said it was no problem, as Anakin was wonderful young man. “I can’t believe he’s fifteen,” Owen said. “When he showed up on my doorstep, barely a year old and me barely an adult, I was terrified.”

“But you raised him. You showed him kindness, compassion, and encouraged his curiosity about the world.” Qui-Gon said. “He gets his kindness from you. And it’s served him well.” Owen blushed.

“I had best be off. Um, what fireplace should I use?”
“You can use the one in my private rooms,” Qui-Gon said. Owen hugged both Anakin and Obi-Wan, telling them again to call or owl or send magic toads or whatever whenever they needed anything. Avara went off to her office, Cody and Rex to the library, and Barriss and Sola off to...well, Anakin wasn’t sure and he wasn’t asking.

Anakin, Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, and Padmé went to the Room of Requirement. They were all silent for a long time.

“So we’ll really have to testify under truth serum, huh?” Ahsoka asked.

“Yeah. And knowing Bonteri, he’ll ask irrelevant questions in hopes of proving us moral deviants.” Padmé rolled her eyes. “But we stick with the truth.”

“What if they ask about the Ministry break-in?” Anakin questioned.

Padmé furrowed her brows. “Most people can’t lie under Veritaserum, but you can dodge. A lot of times it’s a matter of making yourself believe something. Like if you really convince yourself that you were just out petting thestrals, focus on it until you believe it to be true, you can get a little wiggle room. Plus some people are naturally resistant. And if someone’s mind has been tampered with, they can only answer what they think to be true. It’s not an end all be all of guilt or innocence, but a tool of the Wizengamot for sure.”

“We should do it then,” Anakin said. “I should make a batch. We should test it on each other before the court date. No one can know we took that crystal or the prophecy orb. And you know Dooku will want Bonteri to ask about it.”

“I like this plan,” Ahsoka chirped.

“How fast can you brew a batch?” Obi-Wan asked.

“It takes a while to brew, and I need ingredients I don’t have. But Professor Tahl may be able to help.”

They agreed. Anakin really should go the library and study. O.W.L.S were only two months away. But he was still exhausted from the previous night. He conjured large soft chairs, like bean bags, and curled up on one. Obi-Wan immediately curled up in front of him. Anakin asked Padmé to set timer for two hours. She did, setting up mini-beds for herself and Ahsoka. It was a much needed spot of comfort.

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When they woke they went to the library. Two of them had O.W.L.s and Padmé had N.E.W.T.s. Obi-Wan was there for moral support. Anakin and Ahsoka were going over Charms theory, while Obi-Wan was quizzing Padmé on Ancient Runes. They studied long into the night. Library hours were really more like guidelines during exam times, and after the whole school knew what Tua had done, no one seemed to care enough to mess with them.

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Sunday morning brought drama in the form of the Daily Prophet. “Maketh Tua charged with Unlawful Conduct and possibly Manslaughter by Students and Parents” was the front page headline. There was also an opinion piece on whether or not Dooku was installing a regime of pureblood fascists. Anakin appreciated that one. Reading through the article about Tua, it appeared their court date had been set. May 1st. Lovely. That gave them less than three weeks to prepare Veritaserum. Tua was not to be seen at breakfast. Obi-Wan and Anakin exchanged ties, along with many other
couples. A lot of people were wearing their “gay is the new hetero” and “my uterus, my choice” buttons. It made them smile to see it.

Anakin headed to Professor Tahl’s office and knocked lightly. The door opened to reveal a rather disheveled looking Potions Master and Transfigurations Professor. Anakin nodded awkwardly. “Hi Professor Tahl, I was hoping I could ask you about ingredients for a certain potion.”

“Of course, come in,” she said smoothing her hair. Qui-Gon was doing the same. Anakin refused to consider that. “What potion would this be?”

“Well, um, Veritaserum.”

“That’s a very complicated potion, Mr. Skywalker. Are you attempting to make it?”

“I, well, frankly, Professor, I’ve made more complicated potions. But I need to make a batch of Veritaserum. Enough for seven people.”

“I’m going to hazard a guess that this isn’t for a game of Truth or Dare?”

“No. I...All of us who Tua nearly killed will be testifying under Veritaserum. And we want to know how we react to it before we have to do it in in front of the Wizengamot.”

The Potions Master raised an eyebrow. “Is that the only reason you’re going to take it before the court date?”

“We um, may have some things that we think we’ll be asked about, and we can’t get caught.”

Both Qui-Gon and Professor Tahl looked serious.

“Anakin, you need to tell me what this is, right now.” Qui-Gon said.

“Okay, so you remember the break in at the Ministry? Where they wouldn’t report anything stolen and everyone thought that was really weird?”

…..and?" 

“So that was me. Us. Well, me. But we didn’t take anything that wasn’t ours! We took the crystal that Kat had, the one that made her sick. And a prophecy orb. One my father made and hid, hoping I’d find it some day.”

Qui-Gon took a deep breath. “How did you break into the Ministry?”

“Huh. Funny story. We borrowed some thestrals. Someone did some recon for us and liberated a couple of guard uniforms. I made Polyjuice Potion, and two accessories, who I will not name, posed as guards. Then I and another constituent flew up to the window where they let us in. Getting the crystal was fine. I can touch it. But then I heard the orb. I could feel it, I knew it was mine. So I grabbed it. That’s when I tripped an alarm. But we got out without anyone seeing us.”

Professor Tahl spoke, “You, a Fifth Year, brewed a perfect Polyjuice potion, stole thestrals from school grounds, and no one saw you escaping out a window on a massive flying horse?”

“Yes. I mean, most people can’t see thestrals and we brought brooms so we’d be extra fast with the actual breaking and entering. Also I don’t exactly need a broom or thestral to fly...”.

"You need to elaborate on that statement right now,” Qui-Gon said.
"It's another thing I need to hide," Anakin admitted. "I'm an Animagi." He hoped at least part of Qui-Gon would be proud.

"When you were researching the transformation you promised me it was strictly theoretical." So much for pride. "Are you honestly telling me that you succeeded?"

"It felt important at the time! We needed every tool available to protect ourselves. I mean it's how I blinded Kreia Acri. And yes, it helped me get what we needed from the Ministry."

"We?! Anakin, who else is an Animagi?" Well, there was not putting it off now.

"Me, Obi-Wan, Padme, and Ahsoka. We helped each other through our transformations when we got stuck.

Avara spoke. "Are you honestly tell me that the four of you became Animagi as teenagers?"

"Well, we did it in Third Year. The potion wasn't that hard. And we can't risk being put on a registry! Please don't tell anyone else."

"Anakin." Qui-Gon said very slowly. "Do you know how dangerous breaking into the Ministry was? Much less the Department of Ministries? If you'd been caught by one of Dooku's people they would have done much worse than reported you! You promised me not to go looking for trouble!"

"I wasn't looking for trouble, I was after something I knew I needed! There wasn't another way. Plus we had the Polyjuice and contingencies in place." Professor Tahl sat down heavily.

"Anakin, I know you're concerned about the school's safety, but you can't simply do things like that!" He'd never seen them both angry at the same time. It was rather unpleasant.

Anakin took a deep breath. "This is more than concern. This is my home. I was the one kidnapped First Year. The one suspected of murder in Second Year. One of the students who nearly had their soul sucked out last week! And every week more people are killed by Death Eaters. And I care about both of you but every time we try and appeal to to adults at this school, we're told to wait. After we've saved each other for the tenth time we're given a nice speech about how wonderful it is that we all work together even though we're in different Houses, and one day the speech is going to be 'we're so sorry we couldn't save your friend!' That's not an option for me!"

His Professors did look a bit ashamed at that at least.

After a few moments of silence Avara spoke. "So, Veritaserum." Anakin looked up hopefully.

"Yes, please." He said quietly.

"These ingredients can be dangerous," she admonished.

Anakin sighed. "People are always underestimating me. Potion making isn’t so different from working on cars. You have parts that belong in places, orders of operations to follow, major concepts to keep in mind while you do delicate work. I wasn’t just good at Potions because Palpatine was a creep." He said defensively.

"I know you’re gifted with the craft. I suppose I just didn’t know how gifted."

"Neither did I," Qui-Gon huffed. "I am sorry for having made you feel like your concerns are not taken seriously. I will try to do better, I promise."
Anakin hugged his Professor.

“So Veritaserum,” Professor Tahl said again in monotone.

“Yes, please.” Anakin repeated.

“Very well. I’ll have to go into town tomorrow to get some supplies. See me after class on Wednesday and you’ll have your ingredients.” Anakin thanked them both profusely and left.

Anakin was about to leave when Qui-Gon stopped him. "You're Animagus form, may I ask what it is?" Anakin smiled and figured showing was better than telling. When a large raven stood in his place, Qui-Gon had to admit he was begrudgingly impressed. When Anakin changed back he asked another question. "It may not be my place but what are the other's forms?"

"Promise not to tell anyone about us?” Anakin asked. After both Professors agreed Anakin told them, "Obi-Wan is a wolf. Eurasian, to be exact. Ahsoka's a black panther and Padme is an Eagle."

When he was gone, Avara sighed. “How did you help raise both of them?”

Qui-Gon laughed. “With a lot of patience and lot of reminding myself that physical possessions aren’t so important, especially with two boys with a penchant for breaking them.”

“A drink?” She asked.

“I’d love one.”

She opened a secret drawer in her desk and pulled out a bottle of scotch. They both had several drinks.

By the third week of April Anakin had made a rather large batch of Veritaserum in the Room of Requirement. Everyone was there, ready to try. Ahsoka volunteered to go first. They had agreed to start with two small drops and work their way up, estimating that as many as four could be given at the Ministry. They’d also prepared a list of questions. One for the group as a whole, and a separate list for each individual.

Padmé questioned the Gryffindor girl. “What’s your full name?”

“Ahsoka Ujasiri Tano.” Ahsoka’s eyes had a glazed quality.

“On the evening of Thursday, April 3rd, did you take part in an action with a group calling itself The Rainbow Coalition?”

“Yes. I-”

“Stop. Remember to keep your answers short. Only answer what they ask you. Fight the compulsion to say more.” Ahsoka nodded.

“What was your role in the events that night?”

“I helped secure brooms, shirts, and glitter.”

“And what was the purpose of the events that night?”

“To show that Hogwarts should be safe for everyone.”
“And in mid March, the night that the Department of Ministries, was broken into, did you have anything to do with that?”

“No.” Ahsoka ground out.

“So where were you the night of March thirteenth?”

“At Hogwarts.” She was visibly fighting to say more, but for a first attempt it was good.

“Doing what?”

“Sola and I wanted to see the Thestrals up close. We’d learned about them in class and since we’d seen death that year, we wanted to know what they really looked like.”

Padmé ended the questioning session. All of them planned to take it tonight, and Anakin had bottled enough for several test runs before May 1st. They settled in for a long night.

Obi-Wan did surprisingly well under the serum. So did Anakin and Barriss. Sola and Cody had a lot of work to do though. Padmé barely batting an eye. Rex and Ahsoka were fair, but definitely needed practice. Obi-Wan led them through a meditation session to focus on believing a selective truth. They started with a big one. “Of course no students at Hogwarts was involved in the Ministry break in.” They focused on this mantra for an hour before taking a break, teasing each other about personal questions and seeing if they could refuse or avoid answering. Exhausted but feeling much better about things, they called it a night.

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With Professor Windu as acting Headmaster until the trial with Tua resolved, things at Hogwarts were much smoother. Students went back to Quidditch and studying. Slytherin beat Gryffindor and there was only one match left before the House Cup. He, Ahsoka, Barriss, and Sola studied like mad when they weren’t still conducting their own dueling club. They made study sheets outlining major principles, passed them out, and hounded Padmé and Obi-Wan for tips and suggestions. As it got a bit warmer, Anakin even did a presentation for Care of Magical Creatures, despite not taking the class himself. He showed up with Threepio around his neck, and impressed a class of third years with his knowledge of serpents and ability to speak Parseltongue.

As May approached he wasn’t sure if O.W.L.s or the trial were more nerve wracking. He felt fairly confident in his ability to speak under the serum now as they’d been practicing three times a week. And Qui-Gon, Avara, and Professors Windu, Billaba, and Kolar would be speaking in their defense as well.

Soon enough the day of the trial came. Anakin and his friends were all in school robes, and were directed where to sit by Qui-Gon. Headmaster, well former Headmaster Yoda was there as well. The Wizengamot room was dark and the member sat in silently, some meaning in the color of their robes but Anakin didn’t know what.

An older woman with dark skin and white hair banged a gavel on a very tall podium and the room went quiet. “I, Luna Sagitta Venandi, Head of the British Wizengamot, hereby call to order this trial. The defendant is Maketh Lutua Tua. The defendant is charged with Negligence, Negligence with the Intent to Kill, Endangerment of Minors, Cruel and Unusual Punishment, and Attempted Manslaughter. Will the prosecution please present your first witness.”

Sio Amidala gestured for Anakin to take the seat in the center of the room, which he did.

Luna Venandi continued. “Do you, Anakin Skywalker, age fifteen with your legal guardian
present,” she nodded to Owen in the back, “agree to testify under Veritaserum?”

“I do.” Anakin replied. Another official approached him, administered three drops of the stuff. Anakin wasn’t sure but it felt weaker than the batch he’d made.

Both Sio Amidala and Saeko Bonteri questioned him. He answered truthfully, saying that he and the other students were taken to a room to be in Tua’s in words ‘made examples of’. She meant to terrify them, psychologically torture them, but in her negligence nearly killed them.

Bonteri asked him about the night of the Ministry break in. He was relentless about it. He knew the prophecy stolen had been about Anakin.

“Did you have anything to do with the break in at the Ministry of Magic that night?”

“No.” Anakin was proud. He hadn’t even hesitated. He’d meditated all night on making himself believe he knew nothing about it.

“Do you know anyone who had anything to do with it?”

“No.”

Bonteri was angry now. “Where were you that night? Can anyone account for your whereabouts?”

Oh, he’d practiced this one. “I left dinner in the Great Hall, and went to meet Obi-Wan Kenobi in an empty classroom.” Bonteri smiled, thinking he had a lead.

“And what did the two of you do there?”

Anakin grinned inwardly and let himself yield to the Veritaserum. “We kissed. He’s quite good at it. We did for sometime until my robe got too warm and-”

“Enough!” Bonteri nearly yelled. Many in the court were snickering.

"Are you, Anakin Skywalker, the Heir of Slytherin?"

"Yes." Murmurs in the court at that one.

"And how do you know that?"

"I stopped the basilisk three years ago. Dooku or someone working for him had been controlling it, trying it make it kill non-purebloods. But she didn't want to. I summoned Salazar's necklace and stopped the threat."

Venandi had to call order at that. Bonteri was incensed. "How could you, at twelve years old, have stopped a basilisk, much less one that someone else was controlling? And why would you suspect Minister Dooku?"

"I'm a Parselmouth. I could hear her, the basilisk. Salazar made her to protect Hogwarts. All of Hogwarts. And someone was trying to use her for a perverted reason of pureblood racism. I saw Dooku trying to get into Salazar's Chamber and later when-"

"Enough!" Bonteri quickly ended the line of questioning at that.

Ahsoka testified next, followed by Padmé. Padmé even let slip a tear when talking about fearing for her sister’s life. Anakin wasn’t sure how the girl wasn’t in Slytherin. But Padmé said she realized they were fighting bogarts, and tried to get everyone else to cast Riddikulus while she and Anakin
conjured boxes for them. But by then, Sola had cast an Incendio at her bogart, which hit the Dementor’s chain. So even after the bogarts were handled, the dementor was set loose and they had not way to contact anyone outside the room. When she said Obi-Wan destroyed the dementor with a shield, murmurs erupted around the room.

Obi-Wan was questioned next. Particularly about the shield. Bonteri was vicious but Obi-Wan held his ground.

“So, you and your friends were terrified, a Dementor was approaching you. And you, a Sixth Year, summoned the Aegis of Hufflepuff and destroyed it?”

“Yes.” Obi-Wan said, to more murmurs.

“You are claiming that you are the Heir of Hufflepuff?”

“I am.” Obi-Wan said calmly.

“It is rumored that the Heirs can summon the great creations of the Founders at will. Can you do this, Mr. Kenobi?”

Anakin froze. He’d never heard that.

“I don’t know. I haven’t tried summoning it since that night.”

“Well then,” Bonteri grinned maliciously. “Perhaps a demonstration?”

Anakin could feel Obi-Wan’s fear spike for just a moment but then he calmed.

Obi-Wan closed his eyes. Took himself back to that room with the Dementor. Thought about his friends, his school, Anakin, Qui-Gon. How important it was to defend all of them. How people in this very room would condone the event and the woman who had nearly killed them all. He felt his anger rise. Who were they to put he and his family on trial? They were the ones trying to protect Hogwarts, protect Wizards and Witches no matter where they came from or who they loved. He felt his anger peak, and then a familiar weight on his arm, his left hand again clasped against the hold of the shield.

Saeko Bonteri looked floored. Actually, most of the room looked stunned. Anakin smiled widely.

After that the questioning went much more smoothly. Cody and Rex performed admirably, bending the truth to protect those who needed protecting. Barriss was a pro, questioned even though she’d not been involved with the incident. She insinuated that Tua’s practices of bigotry had hurt many students. The Professors who testified said much the same, and that Tua had harmed the academic integrity of Hogwarts.

The students and their guardians were asked to leave. Obi-Wan felt a bit awkward as he left, still carrying the shield. He’d have to see if there was a way to dismiss it. Outside the room reporters were everywhere, snapping pictures, trying to get quotes. Luckily Qui-Gon ushered them all into a private room and spelled the doors shut.

“I think that went very well for us,” he said. “You all did very bravely under the Veritaserum.”

“Still seems not right to me that a government would put children under a truth serum,” Owen said. “I mean we have polygraph tests that can gauge truth telling and lying, but there are so many variable that most courts won’t use them.”
“Wizarding law has a long way to go,” Qui-Gon said sadly.

Obi-Wan held his shield, and was going to use a spell to send it to his dorm. “Wait” said Qui-Gon. “Sadly you may need that yet.”

“People will want pictures, proof that you’re the Heir. It will help our case.” Padmé smiled sadly.

They sat in the room for hours, mostly silent and leaning on each other.

Finally, Sio Amidala beckoned them back into the Wizengamot Chamber.

The took their seats on the curved benches and waited. Venandi took her seat behind the tall podium, Sio Amidala and Saeko Bonteri standing on either side.

Venandi addressed the room. “I, Luna Sagitta Venandi, Head of the British Wizengamot, after a vote by the full Wizengamot, find the defendant, Maketh Lutua Tua, guilty of Negligence, Negligence with the Intent to Kill, Endangerment of Minors, Cruel and Unusual Punishment, and Attempted Manslaughter. The punishment will be seven years in Azkaban. One year for each life you endangered.” Tua cried in her seat. Anakin found no pity inside himself for her. “Furthermore, the Wizengamot has overridden Minister Dooku’s appointment, and sees fit to reinstall Praven Viridan Matthew Yoda as Headmaster of Hogwarts.” Anakin and his friends had to work very hard not to cheer.

Finally outside the Ministry building, there was much rejoicing. No more Tua, Yoda would be back, no more ridiculous rules. Standing away from the crowd, against a pillar, Anakin and Obi-Wan held hands. “We did it.” said Anakin

“We certainly did.” Obi-Wan smiled back. They leaned in and kissed briefly, Obi-Wan’s shield between them. They all slept very well that night.

In the morning, the inter-House table was back. Anakin got to breakfast early for once. As an owl dropped a Prophet into his lap, he looked at the front page. “Tua Disgraced, Yoda Returns to Hogwarts, and the Heirs of Hufflepuff and Slytherin have Risen.”

Beneath the Headline was a picture of him and Obi-Wan, leaning against the pillar, kissing. He grinned. He was so saving that for the Family scrapbook.

Padmé came down for breakfast and met him, smiling at her copy of the Prophet. They were soon joined by Rex and Cody, then Ahsoka and Palo. Finally Barriss arrived. “I am so framing this picture of you two,” she said. Then Sola arrived, carrying a cake that was almost too massive for her arms. It had green icing and bronze frosting for the font which read, “Happy 16th Birthday Barriss!” with a small heart at the end. Then everyone put their presents for Barriss on the table.

Barriss was stunned for a moment before she broke out in a huge smile. As Ahsoka cut and passed out cake, and Padmé took pictures, Barriss stood, holding her hand out for Sola to take. She looked at her watch. “I’m officially Sixteen in an hour and half. My parents are on ‘important business out of the country’ and couldn’t possibly make it here in that time.”

“And?” Sola asked

Barriss stepped up and stood on the table, Sola following her. Once standing and having the attention of most of the school and the head table, Barriss kissed Sola soundly. Cheers went up all around. Even Yoda and Windu nodded happily.
Woo, only one more chapter to go for year 5. I’ve never really written anything that wasn’t for work or school, so learning how to tell stories through trial and error has been a blast. Thanks so much for reading and commenting. It means the world to me. XOXO
With the trial done with, the punishment for Tua already in effect, and Barriss’ birthday having been a major success, end of year exams were most of what was left to focus on. If Padmé had been obsessive about her O.W.L.s, she was absolutely maniacal about her N.E.W.T.s. Her parents were pressuring her to follow them into politics, but she was fighting them after a change of heart, saying she at least needed to establish herself in her own way before getting involved in that life.

Anakin, Ahsoka, Barriss, and Sola quizzed each other relentlessly, asking Obi-Wan to help out. They practiced every spell from their texts and ones they’d learned from dueling practice. They made each other explain theories and concepts behind spells and potions. They even reviewed the Goblin Wars and major battles of pre-Dark Ages Wizards. Thanks to Ahsoka pointing out to Professor Nu that their curriculum was Eurocentric, they also reviewed Magical conflicts in Africa and India. Honestly it was much more interesting than the Goblin Wars, at least.

Slytherin won the Quidditch Cup for the third year in a row, prompting a celebration in the dorm room where pretty much all were invited. Petro and some others hemmed and hawed about the Slytherins only tradition, but once the Firewhiskey got passed around they didn’t mind so much. Anakin, nearly six feet tall, single handedly picked Barriss up and everyone cried out in triumph for the Seeker who’d won the game.

Ahsoka and Rex were making out on one of the couches, Barriss and Sola were enjoying the party but would most likely end up in Barriss’ bed before too long. Even Padmé and Palo were there. Palo was sipping Firewhiskey and he whispered something to her that made her blush.

Anakin hugged Obi-Wan from behind. He was talking to Cody about next year’s Hufflepuff lineup.

Cody grinned. “I’ll leave you two to it,” and walked off in search of one of the bottles of booze going around.

Obi-Wan turned to face Anakin. “Anakin Skywalker, are you drunk?”

“I am only slightly tipsy. I had an idea about how to spend tonight, and it did not involve getting trashed.”

“Oh, and what did it involve?”

Anakin’s face went very serious. “Studying for O.W.L.s. The Goblin wars particularly. I still want to make sure I’m clear on the Battle of-” he broke out laughing as his boyfriend tickled him.

“Okay, okay, it involved us going to my bed, closing the curtains, and casting some very strong silencing charms.”

“I think this is a good plan. In fact, we should work on getting it in motion immediately.” They grinned stupidly and left up to the dorm, followed by a few catcalls but not really caring.

After they were exhausted, panting, and cuddled up together, they let the easiness of content fall over them. The bed wasn’t made for two people, but they weren’t complaining. Anakin was curled around Obi-Wan, under the green comforter.
“What do you think about summer?” Obi-Wan asked, half asleep.

“Dunno yet. Figure I should spend some time with Owen. Padmé’s parents were talking about inviting us all over for a week or two. After that, could be just you, me, and Qui-Gon.” He yawned, nuzzling his nose against Obi-Wan’s auburn hair.

“Mmm,” Obi-Wan agreed. “Sounds nice.”

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They woke the next morning, still happily tangled, and took their time getting dressed. It was a Saturday so there was no rush.

They ate and studied, waiting until after dark and going out in their Animagi forms.

The rest of May passed that way. Comfortable and predictable days, preparing for exams, trying to reorganize dueling teams for the next year.

By the time the end of May and then midJune hit and it was time for O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s, they were nervous but more assured as they’d put the work in. The days of exams seemed to last forever.

Anakin brewed his Potions practical perfectly, which he was happy about. Transfigurations went very smoothly as well. He thought he did well enough on his Charms theory essay. For his practical, Professor Gallia asked him to execute the most advanced charm of which he thought himself capable. He’d practiced for this with help from Padme. He stepped back and with his wand cast a Bombarda. He could see Professor Gallia look horrified, but before the spell could hit anything he called out "Fianto Duris!" The Shield Charm caught the Bombarda like a spider’s web and neutralized it. “Nicely done,” she’d said. “Though a bit of warning would have been appreciated. Also seems your year in particular is upping their game. I need to make my classes a bit more difficult.” He blushed and rushed off to his next exam.

He cursed himself again for taking Ancient Runes and Arithmancy during his O.W.L. year, but felt he did fairly well in both. After a grueling week, exams were over and classes were done. Students could pick up their grades that afternoon. The Hogwarts Express would come tomorrow.

Anakin got his grades but didn’t look. He’d agreed to meet his friends at their spot by the lake and open them together. Padmé and Palo were the last to arrive.

“Alright, let’s get this over with,” Ahsoka said, tearing the seal on her envelope. Everyone else followed suit. Anakin looked at his. He was pleasantly surprised. He’d gotten an O in everything except History of Magic, which he’d gotten an E in. He could take whatever he wanted next year. He was a bit dizzy at the prospect. He handed his card to Obi-Wan, who looked at it and kissed him soundly. “Knew you’d do fantastically, love.” Anakin smiled. Padmé had aced everything, surprising no one. Palo did very well for himself too. Ahsoka and Barriss did nearly as well as Anakin, expect for getting Es in Ancient Runes. Sola followed in her sister’s footsteps of perfect scores. Rex and Cody got some more Es than they’d like but they’d done well enough to pursue the classes they wanted to become Aurors.

“I have no idea what I want to be,” Anakin said.

“You have two more years to think about it,” Palo said. “You have time.”

“You should be an Auror with us,” Rex said.

“Not so sure I want to go after Dark Wizards. Kind of had my fill of them,” Anakin said.
“We could be professional thieves,” Barriss joked. “I mean, we were kind of good at it. And we’ve trained under Veritaserum.”

“You what?!” Palo asked.

“We, uh, practiced before we testified,” Anakin tried to smooth over. “So we’d know what it felt like.”

Palo laughed. “I shouldn’t even be surprised. Half of you can summon Heirlooms from the Founders.”

“Speaking of,” said Padmé, “I was wondering if being an Heir is a lifelong commitment, or if it just...ends when we leave Hogwarts. So I did some researching. Most of what I found is in Latin, but it was easy enough to read. It’s um, it’s not temporary. A person is only chosen if the Heirloom, which has a kind of sentience, thinks they’re a lifelong guardian of Hogwarts. Just one book, mind you, but it makes sense.”

“So, does that mean we have to stay at Hogwarts our whole lives?” Ahsoka asked.

“I’m not sure. But there were stories of Heirs becoming weak after extended periods away from Hogwarts.”

“So what are you gonna do next year?” Anakin asked, concerned.

Padmé smiled. “So, I’ve kinda solved that problem for the time being. I am going to be Professor Gallia’s apprentice. She’s a Charms Master and she agreed to take me on for my own Mastership.”

“You’re going to be here next year?” Anakin grinned.

“Yes. I’ll be studying under her and teaching some First Year classes once she thinks I’m ready.”

“Hogwarts Professors almost never take apprentices,” Obi-Wan said. “You must have really impressed her.”

Palo kissed his girlfriend’s cheek.

“And Palo will be working with dragon preservationists in India this summer!”

Palo smiled. “Her parents aren’t too happy about her being involved with someone who ‘lacks ambition’, but they’ll come around.”

“They will if they ever want to see me again,” Padmé huffed. Then she got a far away look in her face, likely imagining Palo and his dark good looks gently approaching a dragon. Come to think of it, Anakin didn’t mind that visual either…

“What’s wrong, Ahsoka?” Obi-Wan asked.

“It’s dumb, but I just don’t think I’m the Heir of Gryffindor. I mean if I was, wouldn’t I have called my Heirloom by now? But I mean if it means being tied to one school forever…”

“Hey, we’re not Heirs and we’re perfectly decent people,” Rex said, gesturing to himself and Cody. “Besides, I hear long, romantic getaways are easier if you’re not magically bound to a school.” Ahsoka grinned and leaned into Rex.

“But you’re all coming to my parents’ house for the first week of July, right?” Padmé asked? Nods all around. “Good, they’ll be busy with work, but the house and property are fun. We can go
swimming in the lake and Sola and I can teach you to ride horses. Trust me, easier than riding thestrals.”

Anakin was relaxed. He’d spend the rest of June with Owen, just the two of them and Beru. Owen had taken time off work and everything. Then a week at Padmé’s. Then Obi-Wan would stay with him at Owen’s for a bit, where Anakin would Force him to catch up with Muggle pop culture. Then the rest of the summer with at Qui-Gon’s. It would be perfect.

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In a room in a dark house, Tyrannus Dooku kneeled before the Dark Lord Sidious.

“Your attempts at infiltrating Hogwarts with that pathetic mouse of a woman failed miserably. Whereas you were outdone by a child, she was outdone by her own stupidity. And you handpicked her. This is twice you have failed me.”

“I am sorry my Lord. Her credentials made her the most subtle choice—”

“Subtlety!” The Dark Lord yelled. “The time for subtlety is over. The ten from Azkaban, how are they faring now?”

“Better, my Lord. They are growing strong with their magic once again. Most of them can cast the Unforgivables once more.”

“Good. Call a full meeting. No more than three weeks out. Not just the ten from Azkaban. Everyone. Let the whispers circulate. Anyone who ever served me should be in attendance, or they will face the harshest of punishments. And ‘encourage’ families to recruit once more. Fire any mudbloods at the Ministry. Make whatever excuses you need. And step up your own image campaigning. You are not merely a successor to someone who resigned in disgrace. You are the great uniter, the image of a strong and united Wizarding world, and you leave no room for weakness.”

“Yes, my Lord. All will be done as you wish.” Dooku bowed and backed out of the room before standing. His Lord was right. Subtlety was child’s play. They needed to move and move fast. The meeting would be called. He would make grand speeches about a weakened magical community, the potential it had to thrive once more. And a meeting meant action. Meant attacks. He would consult with his closest advisers about targets that would strike the most fear into hearts and minds.

Chapter End Notes

I know this one was short, but the previous one was pretty long. Summer is gonna be full of surprising, mostly of the nasty kind, for Anakin and his friends. Also I have a ton of work to do on my plot notes for Year 6 and 7 so it might be a bit before Year 6 starts. Thank you as always for reading, and please leave a comment. Even a "thank for updating!" can really make me smile.
The summer so far had been amazing. Anakin had introduced Obi-Wan to movies and cars, that latter of which kind of terrified Obi-Wan. “Muggles just, control thousands of pounds of metal all the time? Sometimes for no reason at all?!” But he’d enjoyed movies, and running around London with Owen.

The week with the Amidala family had been chaotic but fun. They’d all enjoyed the horses and swimming in the lake. Anakin and Obi-Wan even snuck off for a midnight swim of their own. Auror Fett had come to pick his boys up and found them all practicing the dueling charm Ahsoka had taught them, the one that extended a wand and made it a shimmering beam, capable of hitting spells back. He had a long talk with the whole group about what they wanted to do after school. He said they were all accomplished duelists, and he was sure any of them would be fine additions to the Aurors. Ahsoka seemed extremely interested. Afterwards Anakin voiced the idea that he had no idea what he wanted to do. Shouldn’t they have Career Days like Muggle schools did? Once he’d explained the idea to Padmé she’d been all over it, writing her mother about it immediately. Padmé very much believed there should be educational programs that existed for students after they turned 17. Anakin had to agree.

Barriss was staying the whole summer with the Amidalas. Her family had officially disowned her after she publicly came out. Luminara told her they’d burned her off the family tapestry. Barriss said she didn’t care as she’d never be asked to put on the hideous thing, but Sola knew her girlfriend was still hurt.

When Anakin and Obi-Wan arrived at Qui-Gon’s, he looked at them strangely. “What is it?” Asked Obi-Wan.

“Five years ago you were two small boys, standing just in that spot. Now look at you, nearly men ready to enter the world.” He hugged them both and they pretended to be affronted by the display of affection and sentimentality.

It was a few weeks into their stay with Qui-Gon, and Anakin was reading under a tree, Threepio crawled up fat and happy from a recent rodent meal on his thigh. Obi-Wan had been out de-gnoming the garden. Anakin had cooked breakfast so he was free for the moment. They’d celebrated last night. Obi-Wan had been named Head Boy. Daara Haridan, of Gryffindor was Head Girl.

Qui-Gon called them in and Anakin knew it was nothing good. The Professor was pacing, which meant very bad indeed. He handed them the Prophet, explaining. “There was an attack in Tutshill last night. And one in Tinworth. Death Eaters. We’re not sure how many, but to enough to cause casualties. Ten dead in one night. All families who have or had non-pureblood members.”

“So he’s back. Palpatine. For this kind of thing to be going on, he must really be back.” Anakin said slowly.
“We suspect, but we have no proof. Furthermore, the attacks while horrendous, may be a distraction for something much worse happening.”

Obi-Wan read the second article. “Dozens Fired from Ministry, To Be Replaced in Within Two Weeks”. The article read that there’d been a scandal involving embezzlement, but Qui-Gon encouraged him to read the names of those let go.

“None of them are purebloods,” Obi-Wan said. “But how can they just do this?! Fake a scandal that’s clearly about racism?”

“They played their cards well,” Qui-Gon replied. “They caused fear with the deaths. And they didn’t fire every non-pureblood. The left plenty. Plenty to fall in line out of fear.”

Anakin slept poorly that night. He dreamed of Ajunta Paal, the man who had received the Dementor’s Kiss. In his dream he was approaching Paal in a dark room with moldy furniture. The same altar from his time in capture as a First Year glowed, the candlelight terrifying. Except there was nothing left in Paal to feel scared like Anakin had been. No soul. Anakin’s scar hurt as he approached. He’d already made his sacrifice, he just had to take from the vessel. Anakin woke screaming.

Obi-Wan was by his side, Qui-Gon not far behind. His scar still stung fiercely. “What is it?” Qui-Gon asked. “I saw- I think I had a vision. But I was Palpatine. He had Ajunta Paal in some room. Was going to do the same ritual he tried to do to me first year. Except Paal, he wasn’t, he couldn’t fight back.”

“Do you feel it was a vision, and not a dream?” Qui-Gon asked seriously.

“Yes. My scar hurt. It the same feel to it that my last vision had.”

“Alright then. As soon as it’s morning I’ll request an emergency meeting with the Headmaster. But it’s late yet. Get some sleep, if you can. Do you need a potion?” Anakin shook his head and Qui-Gon left. Anakin scooted over and Obi-Wan got in. “If it was true,” Anakin said, “he’s really back. And he has a new body now.”

Obi-Wan curled around his boyfriend. “Back or not, we’ve always handled things. And we’ve gotten strong too.”

Somehow Anakin fell back asleep. When he woke Qui-Gon was shaking his shoulder, Obi-Wan still curled around him. He felt he should be embarrassed but wasn’t. Qui-Gon clearly didn’t care. “Up, we have a meeting to get to.” They dressed and at quickly, flooing to a room in a building with which neither boy was familiar with. It seemed a rather dilapidated House. But also a bit homey. Anakin noticed it had multiple floors. Before he could ask where they were, they were following Qui-Gon into a room where Yoda, Windu, and Kolar were waiting.

“Welcome,” said the Professor Windu “to Galventus Manor.”

“Professor, this is your House?” Obi-Wan asked.

“No. Long ago there was a marriage between a Windu and an Amidala. This House was theirs. When they dissolved their union the property entered a lengthy custody battle. So we use it as a meeting place when we need to. Now, we’ve heard of your vision, Anakin. Would you mind going through it with us again?”

Anakin did. Professor Kolar asked him to meditate, to open his mind to his briefly, if he would. Anakin did, but so did Obi-Wan. Anakin wanted an anchor as getting lost in other people’s minds
was easy. After Kolar had seen the memory and confirmed it as a vision, he said he wanted to insist that Anakin have Occlumency training this year if he wouldn’t take more Divination. He said the scar caused a link, which made him a prime target for a body transfer ritual his first year. Whatever link Palpatine had with Paal wasn’t as strong, but it was enough. And he needed to guard against the possibility of someone invading his mind as many Death Eaters were skilled at it. Anakin agreed, saying his friends should also have such training.

“Headmaster, is the current situation dangerous enough that you think we should return to Hogwarts for the remainder of the summer?”

“I think that would be prudent.” The old Wizard said. “The Wards there are strongest. And it would seem that the Dark Lord is indeed back, and going on the offensive.”

“Wait,” Anakin said. “What about Owen?”

“We’ve Warded your cousin’s home heavily,” Qui-Gon said. “Don’t worry, he’ll be safe there.” Anakin nodded. It was ridiculous he couldn’t learn Warding until 7th year. He’d have to teach himself, he supposed.

“Right then,” Qui-Gon said. “Back home, then back to Hogwarts.”

At Qui-Gon’s they packed everything they could, in case the home was attacked. Anakin didn’t own much but he got everything into his trunk and one charmed box.

School wouldn’t start for another three weeks. They kept up with the paper, seeing a new attack almost every day. In a week there were over forty dead.

Two weeks ’til term started and Padmé, Sola, and Barriss arrived. They said their parents weren’t home often and wanted to make sure they were safe, so had gotten permission to send their girls back early.

They couldn’t really process the attacks. So little time and so many lost. And the Aurors were being pushed to their limits. One or two Death Eaters had been caught, but it seemed their ranks were growing.

Professor Windu was back already as well. He agreed to help teach them all Occlumency. They practiced nearly constantly, desperate to master the skill should they need it.

A week before term started and the Prophet read of an attack on Wimbourne. Anakin’s heart stopped. That’s where Ahsoka lived. He couldn’t concentrate, until at noon that day Ahsoka appeared with her mother. The hugging went on for a long time. The Death Eaters had destroyed most of the house but the mother and daughter had held them off long enough for Ahsoka to take one down and Ashla to Apparate them to the edge of Hogwarts. Ashla was in tears, but Ahsoka was keeping a brave face. Ashla was pureblood. The attackers had taunted that they’d just make her watch as they tortured and killed her daughter who they’d called a ”half-blood abomination”. Ashla was going to stay with relatives in Nairobi, but she wanted Ahsoka at Hogwarts, where it was safe. That night they all huddled together in the Gryffindor Common Room. Padmé conjured sleeping rolls and pillows. The slept that way until term started.

When term did start and students entered the hall, the atmosphere was decidedly darker. Though seeing Ahsoka and Rex embrace made Anakin smile. The Gryffindor boy held her for a very long time.

The Headmaster gave a good speech. Saying that Hogwarts was not its walls or classrooms, but its
students and teachers and their cunning, loyalty, bravery, and intelligence. That those thing would always light Hogwarts up from the inside out. That being here did not depend on birth or blood but on ability and choice. That family was always truly made of choice.

The Sorting went well enough. Slytherin got several promising first years, as did other Houses. After the Feast, Professor Tahl said that Slytherin was a great House, because Slytherins could see what really matters. And it wasn’t blood or money. Anakin was going to head to bed when someone pulled on his sleeve. He looked down. There was a First Year girl with dark blue hair. Actually, he’d remembered there being a “Bridger” at the Sorting. This must be Ezra’s little sister, Eevee. And apparently she was a Metamorphagus like her brother. “Are you Anakin Skywalker?”

“I am. And I’m gonna guess you’re Eevee Bridger?”

She nodded, happy he knew her name.

“Ezra said you’d look out for me.” He remembered Ezra owling about his parents splitting. Apparently it was quite scandalous among purebloods.

“I will, I promise. Anyone gives you problems, and they’ll answer to me.” He told her.

She ran off happily. God, he hoped he could protect anyone if Hogwarts became not safe.

Classes started off fine. Professor Gallia said she was deviating from the textbook and teaching the Patronus this year. Padmé was even helping.

Herbology was calming as always, and this term they were studying poisonous plants through history which was quite fascinating.

In Defense Against the Dark Arts, however, Professor Windu wanted everyone on their guard. He announced that dueling teams would start once more, with Captain tryouts that weekend. When the cheering ended, he gave a lesson on the Unforgivables and why each would land a Witch or Wizard in Azkaban.

He explained to kill with magic, with no tool but the pure intent of one’s will, was to sever a part of one's soul. It changed a person forever. Wizards had multiple ways of killing a person, but that one, it took raw hatred.

They went through a very unpleasant retelling of Crucio, and learned that enough exposure, could in fact drive someone mad, just like Muggle torture.

Then they were onto Imperio. They went through the ethics of taking away someone else’s will. Of what it was to be made to feel helpless. Some students were understood the magnitude but others were questioning the severity of the curse. So they had a practical demonstration. “I am permitted by the Ministry to perform this spell for this lesson. Do I have a volunteer?” No one stood. “You, Fett,” he said, pointed to Rex, stand. Rex stood nervously. As soon as he was hit, something changed, not something noticeable right away, but a subtle shift.

“Tap dance up to my desk,” Windu said. And Rex did. After he was released he said he didn’t even know how to tap dance. Some students giggled.

“You may think this is funny, but I just told someone to do something they had no idea how to do, and they did it. Imagine you didn’t know how to kill your friend, but were put under this curse. You’d find a way. Like all mind control, some people are exceptionally strong in resisting. So, let’s
go through the ranks.” One by one they did. Petro managed a backbend. Lux fought a bit but did raise his wand to Windu as commanded. Even if a person could fight for a bit, holding it off was impossible. Barriss did a bit better than most, almost refusing the request to sit on her desk. It was Ahsoka’s turn. Windu cast, and ordered her to flap her arms like a chicken. She stared at him, scowling, her teeth audibly grinding. She repeated the command. “NO!” Ahsoka said. Then she calmed, fully herself again. “Well done, Ms. Tano!” Windu seemed genuinely happy. “Ten points to Gryffindor!” Anakin was up next. The spell came over him. He thought it felt a bit like Veritaserum. “Let’s try getting information,” Windu said. “What is the name of your guardian?” Anakin had to answer. He HAD to. But he could dodge.

“Qui-Gon Jinn”.

“The name of your Legal Guardian!” Windu commanded.

Anakin mentally rolled again. “Shmi Skywalker!”

“The name of your current living Legal Guardian!”

“Owen Lars!”

“Nicely done. See that? If you can’t avoid doing, do differently. Five points to Slytherin.”

At the end of class Anakin was mentally exhausted. But he still congratulated Ahsoka.

“That was amazing! And look on his face! I bet hardly anyone can full out resist the Imperius Curse like you!” Anakin said.

“No one tells Ahsoka what to do,” Rex said proudly, kissing her cheek.

They’d been spending a lot of time together lately. Anakin though she could use someone calm and steady like Rex after the attack on her home.

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Anakin made it to Dueling Captain tryouts right on time. He was fighting Lux, Barriss, and a Seventh Year named Dyas.

Sola was going out for Captain as well, against Tera Sinube and Zatt Devaron.

Obi-Wan would face Jinx Secura and Stass Allie.

Ahsoka would go against Riyo, Daara, and Tru Veld. Tru had never shown much of an inclination for dueling so he was a bit of a wild card.

Obi-Wan was first, holding easily against Stass and not as easily but still firmly against Jinx and his well-known agility.

Sola had grown impressively as a duelist, and easily took her Captain’s Position. She distracted Zatt long enough to petrify him and wasn’t intimidated by Tera’s fearsome barrages.

Ahsoka would have a lot of competition with three competitors. Daara was a good fighter, but relied on her patterns too much, which gave Ahsoka an easy way to disrupt her. Riyo was next. Ahsoka very much wanted to beat Riyo’s pureblood-loving, homophobic ass. And she did. Riyo thought she could overwhelm the long-time captain with a simple Aguamenti followed by a shielding charm, thinking Ahsoka would send it back only to be hurt by the shield’s bounce-back. Instead she she
vaporized the water with a strong Incendio, then strengthened her own shield, casting a stupefy that Riyo would have to twist to deflect and then hitting her with a jelly legs and petrificus totalus in quick succession at her opening, just because she could. Tru, like Jinx, was incredibly agile. But Ahsoka was hardly inexperienced. She stayed light on her feet, feinting until she made a solid hit, making her the third Captain. Riyo hadn’t even stayed to watch, Ahsoka noted with pride.

Anakin went last. His first match was against Lux. It went well but Lux was still too formal, relying on tradition rather than instinct. Anakin hit him with a strong Expelliarmus. Dyas was an unknown entity. He was quiet, didn’t take sides. But he had a glint in his eye that Anakin didn’t like. Windu called the match to start and Dyas immediately tried to catch him in an Alarte Ascendare. Anakin dodged, got his shield up. Which was good as Dyas immediately sent off a Diffindo. It wasn’t against the rules, but it was pushing them. Anakin mentally strengthened his shields, took note of Dyas favoring his right side and leaving his right hip open on casts. He waited for another cast, got off an Everte Statum, throwing his opponent to the back of the ring. He didn’t have time to follow up with a matching-ending spell, but they went on like that for some time. Something about Dyas was off, very off. Anakin wasn’t sure what it was but the longer they fought the worse the feeling got. He needed to end this, now. He wrapped the magic about himself, as tightly as he could, keeping his shield up while barely thinking about it. Dyas was getting angry. Good, let him. Anakin cast a Fumos, obscuring his target’s vision. Then he reached out through the magic, and wordlessly cast a Glacius. He didn’t need to see Dyas. He could feel him through the magic. He’d wanted so badly to end the fight, he’d even heard the ‘crack’ as his magic destroyed Dyas’ shield, encasing him in ice. Windu called the match and Anakin ended the charm, leaving Dyas wet but no longer frozen. Whatever Dyas had gone into the match to learn, he hadn’t liked it. He stormed off after drying himself, much like Riyo had.

He was sweating, but he had one more match. Barriss. They grinned at each other. Barriss’ agility was a force to be reckoned with. She’d beat him once over the summer. Anakin grinned, shields going up. He attacked first, putting Barriss on the defensive. She didn’t mind. She fast enough that she didn’t stay on the defensive for long. They danced around each other, putting up impressive shields, using them both as offense and defense, casting imaginative spells in conjunction with swift movements. Barriss jumped high, and Anakin took a page from Ahsoka. He turned his wand into a deflecting beam, and Barriss was caught by her own mobilicorpus. She was still grinning afterward though. “Next time, Skywalker,” she countered.

Professor Windu addressed the captains. “No surprises here, I guess. Skywalker, Amidala, Tano, and Kenobi.” Next weekend will be full dual tryouts. Saturday right after breakfast. You all must attend the entire process. They nodded. He turned back. “And good job, all of you,” he gestured to every student still in the Hall, “did very well. You’re credits to your school.”

“Wow,” said Sola after their Professor had left. “Are we friends now? Do you think he’ll come to my birthday party?” They all laughed, headed for their respective dorms.

There were fewer attacks than there were during the summer, but they didn’t stop. The second week of school there was another in Godric’s Hollow. That night dinner was simple toast and butter, and a vigil was held for those lost. Two of them were parents of students.

Things at the Ministry weren’t faring much better. More people were being found “guilty” in some embezzling scandal. Kat and Kara Ooni’s parents were involved, even though they were model citizens. Obi-Wan helped make sure other Hufflepuffs were taking care of them.

In the Slytherin Common Room, Eevee sought out the company of Anakin and Barriss. She said
things in Bulgaria weren’t much better. A lot of halfblood students had been taken out of classes, and the Headmistress was very good friends with Minister Dooku. She said her mother had left for England, but her Father wanted Ezra to stay at Durmstrang. Kanan had graduated and Ezra didn’t know where he was, but she said she was really scared about it. Anakin said he’d write to Ezra as often as he could, because he’d tell Anakin things he wouldn’t tell his little sister.

It was after dark on the second Friday of school, but Anakin needed to be somewhere. Or rather, with someone. As Headboy, Obi-Wan got his own room. Anakin knocked on the entrance lightly. It was near Gryffindor Tower, at the end of what looked like a bland corridor. It soon opened, and Anakin embraced his boyfriend. It had been a hellish week, with so many dead. They could sleep in tomorrow, but Anakin very much wanted to be with Obi-Wan tonight. They both took off their stuffy school robes, and Anakin went for the pair of sleep shorts and shirt he kept in the bottom drawer. They crawled up together. Then Anakin felt a familiar padding on this legs. “Artoo?! How the hell did you get in here?”

Obi-Wan laughed. “It’s not the first time. I found her in here a few days ago, sleeping in a sunbeam on the bed.”

“But how? Cats can’t get into password-protected rooms!”

“I hate to break it to you love, but I don’t think Artoo is a regular cat. I think she’s half kneazle.”

“What?”

“You should’ve taken Care of Magical Creatures. But kneazles can manipulate wards. They can tell who their people do and don’t like, and decide to let them in or not. They can also attune themselves to the wards of people who their humans are particularly close to.” He punctuated the last bit with a kiss to Anakin's temple.

“Huh,” said Anakin, scratching Artoo's ears. “You were a little mastermind this whole time and I didn’t know. You think she’s why that creep couldn’t get into the Slytherin dorm last year?”

“Could be,” said Obi-Wan, scratching under her chin. Artoo took her spot on the corner of the bed near Obi-Wan’s feet.

Anakin kissed Obi-Wan firmly. It was returned. He’d meant for it to only be a gentle goodnight kiss, but before he realized, he was underneath Obi-Wan. Oh, and he was definitely hard. And he could feel Obi-Wan against his hip. They’d certainly fooled around before but this felt so intimate. No hiding and hoping someone didn’t hear them. Just them in a room with no interruptions. Where they could actually take their time.

And they did. Obi-Wan eased Anakin’s shirt off, then Anakin returned the favor. They got to touch wherever they wanted. Employ fingernails and teeth and tongues in places they’d never had time to before. Leave bruising marks and kiss as long as they liked. Before long they were totally naked. Obi-Wan moaned as Anakin used his hands to gently explore down his backside, under his balls, back up to loosely stroke his cock. “Drawer,” Obi-Wan panted. “Nightstand drawer.” Anakin reached over it and found a small bottle of lube.

“We don’t have to, just because we can,” Anakin said, kissing him.

“I want to.” Obi-Wan said. “God I’ve wanted you forever.”

Anakin was relieved. Of course he could and would wait but he was glad he didn’t have to. He had the lube in his hand. “How do you want to?” he asked, sucking at Obi-Wan’s neck.
“You, inside me. On my back.” God yes. Anakin moved them so that Obi-Wan was on his back, his knees up and bent slightly. Anakin kissed him hard, enjoying the careless slide of hot tongues. He moved down Obi-Wan’s body, not wanting to rush, but very much excited. He licked at Obi-Wan’s cock, getting it wet, wanting to make him feel good before there was any pain.

Then he raised his head, coated some of his fingers. He sucked at Obi-Wan while he pressed one finger into him. He’d done this much before, knew what his boyfriend liked at least. He quickly added a second, then scissored them. Through their bond he felt some pain but he pushed pleasure towards his lover. Then he added a third, curving them immediately to that spot. Obi-Wan cried out. He felt how much he’d enjoyed that. God, he could make him cum just like this, with his mouth and fingers like he had before. “Don’t you dare,” Obi-Wan said.

Anakin smiled, removed his fingers, then lined himself up. He kissed Obi-Wan. Then he pushed in, gently. He felt his head go through the first ring of muscle. He could feel how much Obi-Wan loved feeling it, loved feeling stretched out. “Fuck,” Anakin panted. “You love this.”

“So do you,” Obi-Wan bit at his neck. “Can feel how much you love how tight I am, how you want to fuck me. And you know I want you to.”

Anakin sped up at that, setting a pace they that drove them both mad. Anakin felt through Obi-Wan that it barely even hurt, just felt so good, that he needed more, was so close. Anakin drove into him faster, his slick hand wrapping around Obi-Wan and pumping as his cock slid against his prostate, Obi-Wan’s ankles wrapped around him so he could go deep, so deep. Obi-Wan came, screaming, seconds ahead of Anakin who bit into his lover’s shoulder as he did.

Obi-Wan was shuddering, could feel a sticky wetness being pumped into him. Oh. Somehow knowing what it was was incredibly hot. Anakin laughed at that. Or tried to. He was still boneless above Obi-Wan. After a few minutes he slid out, to Obi-Wan’s sound of protest. They both used the bathroom, then settled back into each other, naked and content. They could both feel how joined they were in the magic, their magical signatures swirling around them peacefully through the other magic in the room. “Is that how you can feel magic all the time?” Obi-Wan asked, content in his boyfriend’s arms.

“Yeah. Though it’s better like this, with you here too.” They set an alarm and slept peacefully. Artoo only glared at them once for disturbing her sleeping spot, before resettling at the foot of their bed.
Anakin Skywalker and the Rainbow Squad Ride Again

Chapter Notes

Super long chapter. But I had insomnia. Please comment, it helps me feel better about putting anything out there at all for anyone to read oh my god ever.

It was the Saturday of dueling competitions. The Teams hadn’t been named yet but the Captains had.

It seemed like every student third year and over was trying out. And the rest were watching. Like previous years, a win wouldn’t necessarily guarantee a spot. Everything was up to the discretion of the Captains, who were armed with notebooks and quills. The younger years would go first, as their matches tended to move more quickly. Kat and Kara Ooni both did admirably despite being younger than many competitors. Daniel Haridan, Daara’s younger brother also did well. Kai Chen, Kao’s little brother and also a Slytherin, also did well for his age. In Ravenclaw a young boy in fourth year with surname Jordan also proved himself. Ajax Secura, another Gryffindor fourth year, had impressive shield coverage.

Then the Upperclassmen were off. Tera Sinube of Ravenclaw had improved greatly, spinning and finally using her body instead of standing in one position. Daara didn’t too badly either, beating Tru Veld in a close match. Finn Wo of Hufflepuff made a surprising show of force. Soara Antanan of Gryffindor also made a strong showing. It took hours, but at the end of the day, candidates were dismissed and The Team Captains were left to go to the Defense classroom and work out their teams.

After much back and forth it ended thusly:

Ahsoka had Rex, Daara, Ajax, and Kat.

Sola had Tera, Cody, Daniel Haridan, and Tru.

Obi-Wan had Lux, Jinx, Zatt, and Zett.

Anakin had Barriss, Tyzen, Soara, and Finn Wo. He’d debated taking Riyo on. The idea of keeping one’s enemies close a tempting one. But in the end the need for more effective fighters for a more prepared Hogwarts won out over trying to win favor with Riyo. Though he was determined to try with both her and Petro both this year. Threepio would be watching them, if nothing else.

The rosters settled, Sola said they should have new names. The old names had been chosen off of Animagi. In the spirit of a united Hogwarts, she said, they should change that. There was some back and forth. They didn’t want to choose anything to do with with traits of a specific House. Barriss, though not a captain, said it would be impossibly lame to name their teams things as cheesy as “Light, Hope, Dream, and Wish”. Sola laughed and agreed. Then she presented an alternative.

“Elements!” Sola said. “Four Houses, Four Elements. None stronger than another and all part of a whole.” So it was agreed. Obi-Wan’s team would Team would be Earth. Anakin’s would be Water, Ahsoka’s Fire, and Sola’s Air. They each drafted their rosters with Team name and went to Professor Windu’s study to present them. He smiled. Well, as much as he ever smiled in that half way of his. “Good choices, excellent names. I’ll see that these go up in the Great Hall tomorrow morning.”
Obi-Wan had to get to Quidditch practice and then a meeting with the Hufflepuff Prefects, so he kissed Anakin briefly and was off. Barriss and Sola had already made for whatever abandoned classroom they were using these days, and Rex wanted to watch his brother at Quidditch. It left Anakin and Ahsoka some time to catch up. They lazed in an empty classroom with a nice sill for sitting. The door was closed and they had a silencing charm up, just in case.

“We should still teach the Lumos Imperious Club,” Ahsoka said. “Just because someone didn’t get chosen for a team doesn’t mean they shouldn’t know how to really duel.”

“I agree,” Anakin said. He knew her paranoia about preparedness came from having her home attacked. But hell, his did from being abducted so they had that in common. “I was considering dropping Quidditch this year to focus more on that.”

Ahsoka sat up from her position in the wide sill. “What? But you love Quidditch! We made teams together as First Years!”

“I know, and I do love it, but what I really love is flying. And well, flying doesn’t get better than when you’re a bird.” He grinned. “Plus these attacks, there’s too much to focus on. I still don’t have a lead on the crystal.”

“Crystal? You mean what it’s used for?”

“Yeah, but how did Kat get it? I need to find out who gave it to her. If they meant for her to touch it or not. I don’t know why but it’s important, I know it. We've put it off for too long.”

“Well, all we know was it happened at the Three Broomsticks and Madame Rosmerta said no one unusual was in there.”

“Right. So maybe it’s a regular. Maybe We use Hogsmeade weekends and get to know the usuals?”

“Not a bad idea,” said Ahsoka. “Of course if anyone sees us poking around they’ll scram. We’re fairly recognizable. Especially you.”

“Which is the beauty of Transfiguration.” Anakin grinned.

“Can you really do that? Because so help me Skywalker, if you give me a permanent mustache, I will end you.”

Anakin laughed. “No, I promise, I can do it. Holds for about four hours too. Much better than Polyjuice.”

“How have we never been suspended?” Ahsoka wondered aloud.

“Teamwork and alibis. So, things with you and Rex going well?”

“Yeah”, Ahsoka smiled a bit dreamily. "He’s...He’s the strong and silent type. And don’t get me wrong, I enjoy scaring the pants off of most of the boys in this school, but Rex isn’t scared of me. He admires me. And I admire him. I think people overlook him because he is so stoic, but get him going and he has the best sense of humor. Mum keeps telling me I talk about him like she used to talk about dad.” Ahsoka looked a little sad at that.

“Do you think that far ahead? Marriage and family and all that?”

“Yeah, though I suppose most Wizards and Witches are raised to. We’re encouraged to marry young. And not just for ‘continuing bloodlines’. It’s the idea that when you find someone you’re
really supposed to be with, it makes you both stronger, healthier. Magically and physically. It’s not uncommon for couples to wait up to ten years of being married before they have kids.” She paused. “What about you and Obi-Wan?” She grinned knowingly.

Anakin flushed. “What about us?”

“It’s legal for two Wizards to have the marriage ceremony. There are even ways to have biological children, though for two men it takes a bit more going out of your way. Not that there haven’t been successful male pregnancies.”

“What?! That can happen!?”

Ahsoka laughed. “Not out of the blue, Skyguy, don’t panic. It’s complicated. Tons of potions and spells, working with Healers. But seriously. It seems like you’ve always loved him.”

“I guess I have. I mean, in the Muggle world marriage isn’t such a big deal. It’s not expected of people in a lot of cases even if someone gets pregnant. But Obi-Wan...we’ve been through so much together. It’s scary, sometimes, when I think about it. Like I already know I love him. But to really fall. To take someone else’s hand and just decide...you and them, ‘til death do you part. No matter what happens in life. It seems beautiful and terrifying and absolutely insane. I mean at the same time that life would inevitably involve cleaning up that person’s messes and being annoyed with their habits sometimes so it’s insane and boring and still beautiful and terrifying. But I think if I ever did that with anyone, it would be with him. Can’t imagine it being anyone else.”

“That was beautiful. In a totally awkward way.” Ahsoka smiled. “By the way, how’s the sex?” Anakin laughed and hit her with a tickling curse. He’d missed their best friend time.

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Once Anakin had told his friends about his plan to use Hogsmeade to get to know regulars, they were in. They unfortunately couldn’t tell Padmé since she was staff, but the four of them were willing to use the next weekend. They wouldn’t have to wear school robes so no worries there. They’d only slightly alter their faces on the walk down, after most students had already made their way. They’d look only a bit older and a bit different. In the Room of Requirement that week, they practiced.

Anakin focused, gave himself dark hair and slightly crooked nose. Obi-Wan would be a blonde, and his newly grown-in beard would sadly have to go. At least temporarily. Barriss wanted a bit more cosmetic work, becoming a redhaired girl with fair skin, and Sola went platinum blonde. Sola and Barriss spoke French fluently, so they’d be a French couple taking in the sights, asking about the bar. Obi-Wan and Anakin would be entrepreneurs, looking to talk to people about rare objects for their antiques business. All in all it seemed like a low-risk adventure.

Saturday came, and Anakin performed the spells perfectly. They set their watches for three and a half hours and entered the pub. The boys went first, as the girls pretend to sight see.

Anakin and Obi-Wan got seats at the bar as the tables were full. The both ordered Butterbeers, and when Rosmerta had a moment, they got to asking her some questions. She seemed to think Obi-Wan (Finn as we he was going by) was quite handsome, which helped. They said a client of theirs had directed them there, with information about a rare crystal that may be for sale. They made sure to be unnecessarily loud about their descriptions. Rosmerta said she hadn’t heard of anyone, but she’d keep an eye out. Not long after, Barriss and Sola took seats on the opposite side of the bar. Relying on men being men, even at three in the afternoon in a nice pub, Anakin and Obi-Wan waited for other men to approach them and then wandered over to pretend to chat them up. They made themselves
out to be hotshot second hand antiques dealers in search of something rare. ("More rare," Anakin’s character of ‘Han’ had added, “than the beauty of the present company.) ‘Han’ went back to the other side of the bar to order another round of drinks. After all, if they weren’t getting intel, they could at least get buzzed. And more people were drawn in by them, especially to Barriss and Sola, so they were getting a larger reading of the crowd. As soon as Anakin placed his order a man by the bar, perfectly ordinary of height and features, brown hair and brown eyes, grabbed his elbow.

No, Anakin thought. Not perfectly ordinary. He was wearing a false face as well once that would be incredibly easy for anyone to forget. Clever. “I think you and I are going to step outside and have a discussion about certain antiques.” Anakin looked down, the man’s wand already pointed at him. Anakin nodded, sending a message through his bond with Obi-Wan not to worry. At least not yet.

Outside the man cast a subtle Silencing Charm in the alley. “Why are you after a crystal of the one whose description you gave? Keep in mind, I will kill you over the wrong answer.” He told Obi-Wan to come around back slowly, but to not try anything yet.

Anakin thought hard before opening his mouth. “Neither of us are wearing our faces. Someone tried to get that crystal to me. I need to know why.”

“Who are you really?”

“The true owner of that Crystal. At least one of them. It’s in my possession now.”

“Prove you’re Anakin Skywalker.” The threat in the man’s eyes increased. Anakin nodded.

“Let me turn my face back.”

“No. Something else. Answer a question. Who betrayed Lucan Skywalker?”

“Kah Unduli.” The man’s wand dropped Anakin sent the “all safe” signal to Obi-Wan, waved his friends over.

“Impressive transfigurations for students,” The man said. “I apologize for the wand but I had to be sure. I’m glad you have the crystal now. But it’s not safe to talk here. We need to floo to somewhere else. Hesitant but in need of information, they used the Floo at Rosmerta’s and suddenly they were in the dive in Diagon Alley. In The Three Broomsticks, to be exact. “I have a room upstairs, it won’t take long.” Ok, surely if this was a terrible idea, the four of them could take him. They drew their wands followed.

The man found four wands pointed at him as soon as his room door shut, but that he wasn’t shocked.

“Let me show you my real face,” he said, slowly raising his wand and casting a Finite Incantatem.

The three others gasped, but Anakin didn’t know who he was. Half his face was covered in deep scar tissue. “Are you really….” Sola trailed off. “...we thought you were dead.” She seemed on the verge of tears. She cast Finite Incantatem on herself.

“Sola Amidala,” the stranger said fondly. “You’ve grown so much.” Sola hugged him then, and he hugged her back.

“Not to sound out of the loop, but what’s going on?” Anakin asked. He canceled his own transfiguration as it seemed they were no longer needed.

“You look so much like Lucan,” the man said. “I’m sorry, I must introduce myself. My name is Plo Koon.”
“The Auror?” Barriss said with her own face. Obi-Wan was also wearing his normal features.

“Yes, I was presumed dead on a mission. At the time, it was to my benefit for everyone to believe so. Dark things were going on in the Ministry and many Aurors were compromised, if not Dark. So when I heard news of my own demise, I kept it that way.” He sat on the bed.

“I was friends with your father and mother, Anakin. You wouldn’t remember but I held you as a baby. He fished in his drawers, found a picture of Anakin’s mother and the man, without his scars, playing with an Anakin wearing diapers. He put the picture back in the drawer.

“Those working for the Dark Lord had been after that crystal for some time. I obtained it but knew I had to guard it until you were old enough.”

Anakin was reeling. “But what does it do?”

“That’s the catch. I’m not sure. Only that Lucan insisted the Dark Lord not be able to get his hands on it. Your father had many visions. Most of them came true. He knew you’d find the orb he left for you at the same time as the crystal. But it’s your job to discover what the crystal is for and how it can defeat the Dark Lord.”

“You should come back!” Sola protested. “Speak with Yoda, he’ll give you a place to stay. We’re still fighting!”

“I may at that. But before I do, I have one or two more tasks to finish. And the four of you need to be back in Hogsmeade. Anakin, it’s good to see you as a man. Sola, you must keep this a secret. You and Padmé were like daughters to me but this must stay between us. For now not a soul, not even Yoda can know I’m alive.” Sola nodded. “And you,” he held his hand out to Barriss. “Barriss Offee.” She said. He nodded, also nodding at “Obi-Wan Kenobi.” “It was nice to meet you both. Keep each other safe.”

They used the floo downstairs and soon were back in Hogsmeade, walking the path back to school.

“He used to visit all the time,” Sola said sadly. “He was so kind.” Barriss put an arm around her.

“We had rather good luck, finding him our first time out,” Obi-Wan said to Anakin.

“Yes, but it sounded like he wanted us to find him. Probably should have tried last year. Could have made his life easier.”

“Yes, but we know now. One less threat to worry about it.” Anakin nodded at that, threading his hand with Obi-Wan’s, just happy to feel their presences meld.

The next day Anakin signed up for Apparating classes. So did Obi-Wan. “Why didn’t you last year?” Anakin asked.

“Wanted to wait for you.” He smiled. Anakin’s stomach still fluttered at things like that.

Anakin went over his schedule that Sunday evening in the library with his friends. They wanted to do the Lumos Imperious club twice a week. One class for years one through three and one for Fourth Year and Up. That would be roughly two hours for each slot, though he wouldn’t teach each of them both times a week. They could rotate, fortunately. Every other Sunday he had Apparating classes. His dueling team met twice a week for practice, and there were two matches a month. Add to that helping Obi-Wan study for N.E.W.T.s, his own actual classes which were demanding, research on
the crystal, and research on whatever odd, horrifying event was sure to come their way soon, plus Occlumency, and that left less than no time for Quidditch.

Anakin sighed. He wasn’t looking forward to telling Zett Jukassa that he was no longer Lead Chaser. Though at least Petro would be happy.

“What’s wrong, love?” Obi-Wan said, hearing Anakin sigh. “Nothing, just decided there’s too much going on to keep going with Quidditch this year.”

“Are you sure? You don’t have to help me study. I know you love flying.”

“I’m sure. Plus I like my kind of flying better.”

“Yeah, but you’re competitive. You like being on the field.”

“I’m still on Team Water. Plus, without our dynamic Beater duo, it would be a rough season.”

“Skywalker, did I just hear our Lead Chaser say he was out?”

Barriss was gritting her teeth. Uh-oh. He had forgotten about her reaction.

“Um, yes. I am. There’s a lot do with this fun new research project we all have and-

“Yes!” Barriss said. They got shushed by the librarian.

“Um, what?”

“That means I’m going out for Captain’s position. Kao was good but didn’t know how to whip Petro into shape. This will make Slytherin Cup Winner and me Winning Captain.”

“Wow, so you won’t even miss me at all,” Anakin deadpanned.

“Oh, it’ll be hard to find a new lead Chaser. We’ll need tryouts. Lux is good but you were a better natural leader.” Anakin swore she rubbed hands together.

Anakin yawned and went for more coffee. They had finally started serving it at the Great Hall. Or maybe only upperclassmen could see it. He wasn’t sure. He’d had a late practice session with his team last night, and had gotten to breakfast early to finish his Sanskrit reading for first period.

“You’re taking Sanskrit?” Ahsoka asked. “Yep. With Sola and a few others. It’s an interesting class. Professor Ti gets super into it.”

“But why?”

Because I don’t know what I wanna do when I graduate, but I liked learning Latin, and I like Sanskrit, too. You know cursebreakers have to know a lot of dead languages.”

“Oooh, Anakin Skywalker, Cursebreaker. I like it.” Ahsoka grinned.

“I mean haven’t signed myself up or anything. Did you know Padmé is really going ahead and trying to organize a career day?”

“She would,” Ahsoka sighed, piling tons of bacon onto her plate. Anakin was just about done with his reading.
The Prophet dropped. Another attack. This time in a village in Scotland. Several muggles were killed. Luckily none of the student body were effected. Another letter dropped for Anakin afterward. Ezra had responded to his writing, finally. Apparently things in Bulgaria were dark indeed. Ezra’s family were pureblood for the past four generations, but apparently his father hadn’t been towing the line enough at work. Some important governmental position. He said he thought things would blow over though. But something was off about the lettering. Sola read over his shoulder.

“Oh! It’s a secret message. Padmé and I used to use this trick when we didn’t want our parents to read our letters.”

“How do you decode it?”

“Hah, a Cursebreaker who can’t work out a letter.” Ahsoka barked. Anakin took some of her bacon for that comment.

“Well, it’s not a code exactly. You have to know a word or phrase that the person would use in order to grant you permission.”

Anakin thought. “Kanan Jarrus” he said, and tapped the paper. The lettering changed immediately. Everything would not blow over, apparently. Ezra and his father were making a midnight escape and hoping to join his mother and sister in London. He still hadn’t heard anything from Kanan, and was losing hope.

Anakin’s gut clenched. The atmosphere at the table was considerably lowered. Anakin didn’t know what he’d do if he had to go months with no idea where Obi-Wan was. Eevee came up to him. She’d seen him get the letter. He wasn’t going to lie to the girl.

He said they had to talk in private. He went into the nearest classroom and spelled it shut and silent. “Ezra said he and your dad are were trying to use a network of friends and get out of the country last night. He didn’t say when he’d be able to contact me next.”

“It’s because we don’t hate Muggles, isn’t it?”

Kids picked up on so much. “Yes, at least partly. Or other people whose families haven’t had magic for a really long time. Or men who marry other men or women who marry other women. But it’s good. You should be really proud that your family doesn't hate people for such silly reasons.”

“I am,” she said after a long time. “I know Ezra loved another Wizard. Will he be okay?”

“I don’t know, but if there’s anything I can do for him, I promise I’ll do it. And so will my friends. And hey, can you keep a secret for me?”

She nodded. “Some people don’t think that First Years should learn spells like in duels. But we’ve had a club for a long time, and we teach dueling. If you wanted to learn, you could join.”

“Really?” She smiled for the first time that morning. “Of course. But it’s super secret. So until the first meeting happens, don’t tell anyone. He fished in his pocket. This looks like a regular knut, but it’s Charmed. When the first meeting happens, it’ll buzz a little and get real warm. That’s how you know to go the third floor, where that really ugly statue of the hag is, okay? It should be sometime next week.” She grinned, pocketing the knut and promising not to lose it. They left, both of them feeling better about not being passive, sitting ducks in their situations.

Later that day, after a double Advanced Potions session, Anakin felt extremely tired. He had so much history and theory to read through before he even got to this set of potions families. Thankfully just one more class. Transfigurations. They were working on elemental properties during
transformation. Ice into fire and the like. Which sounded easy but most of the class would likely have trouble. They had salamanders today, and were instructed to turn them into newts. This was in theory very easy, but salamanders had elemental inclinations of fire, and newts had that of water. Anakin focused on the elements, instead of ignoring them and favoring the more familiar elements of the change. Salamanders were drawn to fire. They were like little living embers, magically speaking. Newts were happiest around ponds. Even if they weren’t in the water, the needed to be by it. Anakin focused, thought of the ember inside the salamander and how the salamander wanted to know what it was like to be its opposite. The salamander wanted to experience swimming, feeling at home in another world. Anakin felt for how fire turning to water might feel. Not steam but an alchemical transition, flames turning just as easily into cresting waves. Then he cast. In front of him was a newt, slightly dewy looking.

“Well done, Anakin, ten points to Slytherin!” Qui-Gon said. By the end of class no one else had managed. Qui-Gon asked Anakin to come to the front and explain.

“Elemental transitions are so hard for a reason. Because everyone holds the illusion that all matter especially elements, are separate. But they’re not. You have to picture the hard parts of the transition. Don’t think of what you’re transfiguring, but what it really is you’re working with. You’re not trying to change a lizard into another kind of lizard. You’re trying to change a hot coal into a drop of water. Visualize all four elements, shifting into each other and back into different forms. A gust of wind becomes a crashing wave, the wave falls and becomes a layer of stone in the earth. The earth shifts and stirs a breeze. They’re not different things at all. They’re connected. Just... try and connect them in different ways.”

Everyone left, many of them looking at Anakin like he was crazy. He was used to that though.

“That was very well put, Anakin. It takes many wizards decades to come to that understanding.”

“I had the benefits of a Muggle upbringing,” Anakin joked.

“How do you mean?”

“Owen went through a Buddhist phase. He used to say things like ‘the greatest illusion in life is separation’. When I was a kid I thought it sounded lame. But I appreciate it now. It was definitely useful for the meditation.”

“Transfiguration does seem to be a gift of yours. Would you consider it as a career?”

“What, teach? You’re not retiring are you?”

“Not so soon, no. But the world always needs gifted teachers.”

“I don’t actually know what I want to do,” Anakin frowned. “It’s hard to think past there being a Dark Lord out there, hurting people.”

Qui-Gon hugged him. Somehow Qui-Gon always knew when to hug people.

Later, he was helping Obi-Wan study in the library that afternoon before dinner. After dinner Obi-Wan had duel team practice and Anakin was going to start researching crystals. He planned to asked Professor Kolar, as someone versed in mystic arts might be a good resource.

Eevee came running into the library, tears in her eyes. Anakin stood immediately to intercept her. He held her until she was ready. Thought he didn’t know if he was ready. He hoped desperately that Ezra was alright. She looked up and smiled. Thank God. “He’s home! Ezra’s Home!” Obi-Wan hugged him and soon all three of them were hugging. Eevee left to go tell her friends.
As soon as she was gone Anakin turned to Obi-Wan. “Now we have to find Kanan” he said quietly.

“We should ask our new friend.” They both nodded.

The next morning however was more bad news. Attacks in Bulgaria and in Hogsmeade. Well, that put a wrench in their “find Plo Koon again plan”. Hogsmeade weekends were cancelled again. There was something new, too. Propaganda. “Hide no Longer!” “End the Witch Burnings!” the flyers said. Apparently they were all over Hogsmeade. “Honestly is anyone buying this?” Anakin asked. ‘End the Witch Burnings?’ The last time that happened was when Oswin the Mad accidentally set himself on fire!”

“It will stir people,” Barriss said. “Get them thinking about joining the Death Eaters.”

“We have to counter this,” said Ahsoka. “We should replace all of it with pictures of giant rainbows!”

Obi-Wan nodded but said she should lower her voice. “We should retaliate. But we discuss it in secret. Tonight. Include Padmé.” They nodded. They’d have to wait.

In Herbology Petro made a point of noting how everyone’s favorite Slytherin had let the whole team down by quitting.

Anakin countered that Barriss would do just fine as captain, and she was the real favorite as one of the school’s best Seeker. Then the boy had something about having less queers on the team. Anakin rounded on him quietly. “Why do you do this? Because you think it’ll change that you’re half-blood or make people like you more? It won’t. Don’t do this when you could be so much better. People have been killed and what you’re worried about is who someone else is kissing?”

Then he’d moved to the other side of the greenhouse.

“We’ll miss you on the team,” Tyzen said, always a source of quiet friendship.

Finally the meeting was called. Anakin hugged Padme, he’d missed her constant presence even though she was still at school. Her apprenticeship kept her plenty busy though. They were all exhausted so they got down to business.

“I think we could reasonably cover up all the propaganda,” Ahsoka said. “We need to show there’s an opposition. Because word is that the Ministry is taking their time getting it down.”

“I agree,” said Padme, “but we have to ensure we aren’t caught. This Ministry would absolutely put us on trial.

“Thestrals are too big so….brooms and invisibility potions?” Anakin suggested.

“Okay, but that only gives us two hours of invisibility,” Sola pointed out.

“So twenty minutes to fly there, an hour to cover the propaganda, and twenty extra minutes to get back.” Obi-Wan said.

“I’ll have to ask Professor Tahl for ingredients,” Anakin said. “But we can trust her.”
“She is practically my step-mother at this point,” Obi-Wan agreed.

“Oh they’re officially getting it on!?” Barriss exclaimed. Sola cackled.

“For love of all that is sacred, please don’t ever refer to my foster father as ‘getting it on’”. Obi-Wan said, looking like he wanted to Obliviate himself.

“Can you have the potion ready for tomorrow night?” Padme asked. Tonight was Friday so if he approached Professor Tahl very early and worked all day, then yes. Good thing he’d given up Quidditch. Actually he could get the base going tonight if he timed it right tomorrow.

“Yes. I’ll need to start setting up a cauldron and ingredients tonight though.”

“We’ll use my room,” Obi-Wan said. “I have everything left over from advanced potions and you already have some of your stores there.”

They looked up to a bunch of stares.


“We just assumed you two lived together like, full time.” Ahsoka said.

“It would be a bit cramped in that room,” Obi-Wan said, though he sounded like he was considering it.

“I keep extra clothes and robes there. I do stay a lot.” Anakin said defensively. “Plus Professor Tahl let’s me get away with a lot. I’m pretty sure that’s one thing she wouldn’t let fly.”

“If she knew..” Sola sing-songed.

“We need to hang out with Rex more.” Obi-Wan sighed. Anakin agreed. They split for the night.

In Obi-Wan’s room, Anakin set up the copper cauldron he’d need. He got the base going, nice and thick. Thankfully it wasn’t a particularly smelly potion. First thing he’d ask Professor Tahl for ingredients.

He curled up with Obi-Wan. It was getting to be his favorite way to fall asleep. “You could you know, move in if you wanted.” Obi-Wan said sleepily.

“Yeah, but then you’d be gone next year and I’d miss it that much more. Plus We have time. I like staying here when it suits us both. And I’m a slob. In such a small room I’d drive you mad.” Obi-Wan laughed and kissed the back of his neck.

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They awoke to Obi-Wan’s alarm. “Want to come with?” The Hufflepuff nodded and they went downstairs together.

They knocked on Professor Tahl’s office, hoping she was awake. She answered in her robe, yawning.

“Professor!” Anakin greeted. “Could we have a moment of your time?” She gave them an exasperated look with her eyes that didn’t see, then turned, gesturing for them to follow. Qui-Gon was exiting what Anakin thought was the bedroom, pulling his robe closed. Thank Merlin for small miracles. He startled at seeing Anakin and Obi-Wan there. They sat on the couch in the room the Potions Mistress had gestured to. Qui-Gon got his own cup of coffee.
“Gentleman, I’m not a morning person.” She started.

“Neither are we, Professor, but it’s important. I need ingredients again.” At that she chugged her coffee and poured herself another mug.

“For what potion?”

“The Invisibility Potion.”

“Do we want to know why?”

“Most likely not,” Obi-Wan answered.

“Boys, is this truly, important?” Qui-Gon asked. They exchanged looks.

“Yes. Because no one’s doing anything and we can, even if it’s only something small.” Obi-Wan said.

“Dangerous?” Tahl asked

“On a scale of one to ten, it’s a four. Compared to the Ministry break in it’s nothing.” Anakin replied.

“Those ingredients aren’t scarce like Veritaserum, so you’re on a clock. Something you’re probably going to do tonight.” Professor Tahl said. “I’ll give you the ingredients but you give me times. Exact ones. I want to know when you leave, when you take the potion, and when you get back. Use house elves for the notes. The last one had better say ‘Avara Tahl is Queen’ on it. Understood?”

They nodded, and soon left with the required ingredients. Really, she was Queen.

That night the mission went off without a hitch. And in the morning, the Prophet had in very vivid pictures, signs of the graffitied graffiti. Instead of ominous messages and pictures of persecution promoting blood purity, there were rainbows. Some butterflies. A few stars and clouds here and there. One was even covered with a unicorn. There was a sign near the center of Hogsmeade. It read, “You’re Welcome, from the Hogsmeade Beautification Group, a non-discriminatory employer. We accept all genders, sexualities, races, sentient species, and lineages. Bigots need not apply.” It was a very good morning.
Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For days Anakin and his friends rode the wave of hope they’d sparked. Anakin felt he’d helped people feel safer. Students seemed to feel better, there were op-eds and speakers on the Wizarding Wireless saying how glad they were that someone was fighting back, even in small ways. Not long after, Ezra appeared at Hogwarts. Transfer students were rare, especially mid term, but the Headmaster had made an exception. Ezra was given a mini-Sorting ceremony at dinner, and was happily accepted into the Sixth Year Boys Slytherin dorm. His sister ran to greet him afterwards. For a couple of days following that, Anakin noticed that Obi-Wan was extra possessive. Ensuring their ties were always swapped, having an arm around him even when they were just studying at the library.

In Obi-Wan’s room one night Anakin confronted him about it. “Are you jealous of Ezra? You know I love you.”

“I know,” Obi-Wan deflated a bit. “It’s just you seemed happy with him at the ball, his sister loves you...I just worry I won’t be enough.”

“Hey, I’ve been gone on you since second year. That’s never changed. I just never thought you would ever feel the same way. Ezra’s a friend, like Barriss. And we’re trying to help him find his boyfriend. Plus, I love you. Trust me, no one has anything on you.”


“You know, you could always leave a few marks if you’re worried about people knowing we’re together,” Anakin teased. They didn’t do much more talking that night.

Having made a statement against the Death Eaters, knowing that Ezra and his sister were safe, Anakin and Obi-Wan felt safer too. And then, two weeks after the Hogsmeade Beautification Project and just after the first dueling match of the season in which Sola’s Team Air had beaten Obi-Wan’s Team Earth, there was another attack. This one particularly savage. A small township in Puddlemere had been decimated. Bodies had been left in the streets, mutilated. Some muggles and some Wizards.

It was an abomination. And the Daily Prophet ran a piece about how it wasn’t Death Eater related, how it was random criminals, if not Muggles threatening to out their magical neighbors. They were all beside themselves, curled up in the Room of Requirement. They had meant to be teaching a First through Third Year dueling class, but all anyone could do was sit on the floor together, curled up tight. Anakin thought at a rapid pace. He had to find Plo Koon again, get people ready to fight. Suddenly a House Elf appeared, asking him and Obi-Wan to go to the Headmaster’s Office. They nodded and were off, Ahsoka, Barriss, Rex, and Sola keeping the younger kids company.

They met Ezra at the gargoyle to the office and after they ascended the spiral staircase they were met by The Headmaster, Professor Windu, Professor Tahl, Professor Billaba, and Qui-Gon.

“Hello, boys,” Qui-Gon said. “Despite the company here, you’re not in any trouble. In fact, we brought a few friendly faces.”

Plo Koon appeared from the chamber behind the professor’s desk, and his hand was on Kanan’s
“Kanan!” Ezra cried, embracing his friend. Kanan looked a bit roughed up with his blackened eye and they way he was holding his arm awkwardly, but he was very much alive. He hugged Ezra fiercely. They exchanged words in German which Anakin and Obi-Wan didn’t understand, but figured they weren’t meant to.

“Anakin,” Plo Koon said, “Good to see you again, son.”

“You as well, sir.”

“Please, call me Plo. Found your friend here. He’d left his family, had been living underground tripping up the Death Eaters were he could. He tried following Ezra here to London discretely but was nearly caught.”

“You saved him?” Ezra asked.

“Well, we saved each other’s hides is more like it. Kanan here is a strong fighter.” Plo and Kanan exchanged understanding smiles.

Ezra seemed fairly unwilling to let Kanan go.

The Headmaster spoke. “We can keep Mr. Jarrus here, for awhile at least. He is quite talented at Defense and we can arrange paperwork for his Defense Against the Dark Arts apprenticeship because we have contacts in the Ministry. However those contacts may not last for long. Tonight, you will stay with Professor Windu. Then you will have your own rooms.”

Kanan thanked the Headmaster profusely, but the Headmaster waved him off. “You saved lives, in Bulgaria. You did not have to and you did it anyway. It is we who owe you.”

They said goodbye to Plo Koon, all four boys hugging him gratefully.

“I may not have saved anyone or myself if I hadn’t met everyone here,” he said seriously. They descended the stairs, Mace Windu walking ahead a bit to give them a measure of privacy. Anakin and Obi-Wan hugged Kanan again, then went to share the good new with the Room of Requirement and give Ezra and Kanan some privacy as well.

As soon as they were back in, cries of “Kanan is back!” rang out. The younger kids didn’t know him, but they were glad to see some good news among the upper ranks. They even managed to get a bit of dueling in. Anakin had devised exercises to teach them how to roll properly and and come up with one’s wand at the ready. They turned it into a game to see how far each could roll.

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan made sure that everyone at least knew how to cast a Jelly Legs Jinx and an Expelliarmus.

Knowing that Kanan and Plo Koon were okay mean so much. After the kids had gone off before curfew, the upperclassmen talked.

“We need an effective army,” Anakin said. “We need everyone to train, more than we already are. We need them to trust each other enough to fight together. To fight for each other. Without that the Death Eaters will win.”

“We could turn the Room into more than just a Room!” Ahsoka’s eyes lit up. “We could change it
into a home, a field, different scenarios where a fight might happen. Have the upper years divide and go at each other in scenarios!”

“Brilliant!” Said Rex. “Muggle London, a suburb, they need to be ready for anywhere.”

“And it needs to be more than just students,” Sola said. “Professor Tahl and Jinn should help. Plo was an Auror. He could teach us loads of things. We need experience.”

“We need a rallying cry,” said Barriss. “Hogwarts is supposed to be safe. We need something...a statement.”

“It’s like Yoda said, like our club is called. Lumos. ‘We are the light’.” Sola said. “We’ll get Padmé, talk strategy with her soon.”

They agreed and went their separate ways for the night.

The next day, a Sunday, Anakin finally went to see Professor Kolar at his office hours.

“How can I help you?” The older man asked.

“I had a question about crystals,” Anakin started. “One in particular.”

“One that’s missing from the Ministry?”

“Can Brits plead the Fifth?”

Kolar laughed. “What about said crystal do you need to know?”

“Well, honestly, anything. What’s the intention of a crystal like that?”

Kolar thought for a moment. “Crystals are like wands. Their intent can often be up to the person or people who use them. However that crystal I know at least a little about. It’s designed for a ritual. A warding ritual of great power. I know it requires multiple, and specific users. Anyone who touched it who did not meet its criteria...well we saw what happened to Ms.Ooni.”

“What kind of warding though? There are so many kinds!”

“There was a prophecy about that crystal. Did you know that?”

Anakin shook his head.

“Not many heard it, as it disappeared after its creation. But your Father did. And so did I. We were interning in the Department of Ministries together. ‘Four will have and Four will give, Four will sacrifice and Four will live. From the past they come, against death to defend. In the present they stay, A watch without End.’”

Anakin wasn’t sure how to interpret parts of that. So the Four Heirs, clearly. To defend against death, that must mean the Death Eaters. But a watch without end? Was that what Padmé had suggested about being bound to Hogwarts?

“Thank you, sir, I think I need to think about this.”

“Anytime, Mr. Skywalker. And here,” He handed Anakin a photo. God, it seemed everyone had photos of him as a baby. It was his Mother, standing near a crib with a mobile of stars and wands,
holding a pudgy infant. “I spoke at your parents’ wedding. This should be yours. They loved you very much.”

Anakin nodded again, thankful for the information and the gift.

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That night before opening the Room of Requirement for the upper years, Obi-Wan divided them into teams arbitrarily. Last man standing would win. Then he unleashed them on a simulation of Muggle London. It went beautifully.

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The duelists were stepping up their games like never before. It was Halloween and even some parents had come to see duels.

Duelists were more ferocious, agile, inventive, and resourceful than ever. It was a Saturday and there was a match supposed to take place right before The Halloween Feast. Boba Fett was in attendance, as was Sola’s mother, and even though she wouldn’t acknowledge her daughter, Barriss’ mother. Owen had even been allowed to come. There were others in the conjured stands that Anakin couldn’t identify.

The match was Anakin’s Team Water against Ahsoka's Team Fire. All five would compete. Anakin sent Finn out first against Kat. They were the youngest duelers on the teams, so it felt fair. However Kat was not to be underestimated. Even though she was a Fourth Year, she wielded flame charms and shields stronger than others much older than her. She beat Finn but only narrowly. Next was Ajax against Barriss. Ajax had raw power, but he barely knew what to do with it. Barriss moved like air, spinning and rolling one second, casting then blocking. She used the beam charm to deflect Ajax’s blasting curse back to him. She won the match easily, bowing for the crowd. Once the smoke cleared, it was Tyzen against Rex. Tyzen was crafty. He could power through spells without blinking while midway through a roll. Rex was strong though. His defenses were impenetrable and he could move like lightning when needed. It was another close match but Rex won.

Anakin debated sending himself against Daara or sending Soara. In the end, he sent Soara. She had come so far, she deserved it. Daara’s Head Girl duties clearly had distracted her this year. She barely blocked Soara’s Arrow Charm, then fell to her Petrificus Totalus.

Anakin and Ahsoka grinned at each other. They were tied now. It was down to just them. When Mace said “duel!” Ahsoka sent a jet of flame at Anakin. He wordlessly had shield up in plenty of time. He fortified his shields and getting spells around them. Ahsoka swept Anakin’s ankle but he took her with him, pulling her over his shield and onto her back. He was about to end the match but she quickly righted herself with her shield. But not fast enough. He cast an Expelliarmus, catching her and sending her wand flying. But she grinned. Of course she’d want to go public with her power like this. He could do wandless magic, but he didn’t have a monopoly and she'd been practicing. She called her wand to her using only her voice. They could hear people in the crowd gasp.

Anakin made his shield larger, waiting for an opening. Someone in the crowd yelled “mudblood!” Ahsoka was thrown. A few people now, screaming slurs about purebloods only and "halfblood traitors." Ahsoka’s energy was changing. She was afraid. Anakin reached out, could feel her mind going back to the summer and to the attack she and and her mother had faced. He looked for Obi-Wan, to help her out of the panic attack.

“Ahsoka!” he heard Rex call out. “You’re the strongest person I know!”
Something in Ahsoka settled. She wasn’t afraid anymore. She was furious.

She dropped her defensive posture, her braids swinging. “I am Ahsoka Ujasiri Tano!” She said as loudly as though she had cast Sonorous on herself. “I am a Witch!” Her magical signature was enhanced like crazy, Anakin thought like when…”My mother is a Witch! My father was a Muggle! A strong man! And I am the Heir of Gryffindor!” Two large daggers appeared in either of her hands, glowing from within, like fire, the element she so embodied. The blades sang. Of battles and bravery and those who kept watch.

There was silence, and the applause, like nothing Anakin had ever heard before. People were standing, cheering, crying. Ahsoka turned to Anakin, coming down from the high of calling an Heir’s weapon for the first time. They hugged tightly. Then she hugged Rex who had jumped in to the ring.

“So strong, I always knew it,” he was muttering into her hair.

The Professors tried to make Order, the clear the room for the Feast to begin. Padmé and Obi-Wan and Anakin all embraced together. Knowing they were bound. And not only by fate, but by choice.

As the murmurs died down, and Ahsoka sent her blades to her room with a thought, the duel was called a draw, to much applause. Finally, everyone was seated, guests and students alike.

Then, as though they shared one mind, six students approached the stage. “We are glad that our duels have drawn your attention,” Sola started. “But it’s more important that you know why we fight. We may be young, but we understand what is happening. We mourn those have been lost to senseless, racist violence.” There was murmuring at that.

Barriss took her turn. “And we mourn those, not able to live as themselves because of silly and hateful prejudices. But we fight because we are Hogwarts. And Hogwarts is one. We are not our Houses or our Elements.”

Obi-Wan spoke next. “We are our dedication, our bravery, our intellect and our resourcefulness. More importantly, we are all those things used together. Our efforts to learn have not been forced on us. We have embraced and directed them. No one forced a student to learn to shield while in motion anymore than they forced them to learn to help each other in classes, or to trade ties.”

Anakin spoke up. “We have taught ourselves, because we know that we need each other. We know we live in dark times, and we know in order to stand against the darkness, the light must be united! We will be the light side that the dark cannot hide! Hogwarts stands, as always, united!”

Sola finished. “We are the light!” Raising her wand in lumos. Everyone else on stage followed, including most professors and many parents. Cries of “We are the Light!” Went up everywhere.

Anakin was floored. Most of these people were good people. And he and his friends would defend Hogwarts and her ideals no matter what.

When the room quieted, and people sat, there was finally food. Anakin found his appetite diminished with the adrenaline. He saw Ahsoka and Rex head off, likely for the Gryffindor Common room to firecall her mom.

Anakin made his way with Obi-Wan over to Owen.

“That was incredible, kid,” Owen hugged him tightly. He hugged Obi-Wan as well.

“Still keeping this one out of trouble?” Owen winked.
Obi-Wan blushed.

“Actually, I wanted to ask you two something. I proposed to Beru, and she said yes.” He beamed like the happiest man on earth. “It would mean a great deal if you’d both come, and more if you’d be groomsmen.”

Anakin smiled like a maniac. “Of course we will!”

“I mean it won’t be any fancy affair, but it’ll be nice. Sometime this summer.”

“I’d be honored,” Obi-Wan said, getting crushed in another hug.

“I’ll write you about details. As it is, Qui-Gon’s offered to escort me home. Though I think I’m getting the hang of this floo powder.”

They said goodbye again as Owen was off with Qui-Gon.

Anakin looked around, seeing Ezra curled into Kanan’s side, Sola and Barriss laughing over the main course. Padmé talking happily with Professor Tahl. And they held hands, heading wordlessly to Obi-Wan’s room.

Once they were inside, Artoo also present, they closed the door and just sat together for a long while.

“All Four Heirs,” Obi-Wan said. Anakin had told him of the Kolar’s prophecy regarding the crystal.

“All Four of us,” Anakin agreed. “And a bunch of warriors, ready to fight for Hogwarts. Things could get dark in the coming days. Will get dark, now that they know all four of us are ready.” Obi-Wan nuzzled into Anakin’s hair and Anakin nipped at his bearded jaw line.

“They will get dark. I imagine Dooku has something in motion already. Something involving more bodies.”

“And a wedding coming up.”

“Yeah, Owen getting married. Can hardly believe it but it couldn’t be more right at the same time, you know?”

“Mmm. I want to marry you.”

Anakin startled.

“Not now, mind you,” Obi-Wan said, kissing his ear. “But someday. After this blasted war and all the insanity it’s brought. I’m not telling you because I want an answer. Just so you know that I know what I’m after. That I love you that way.”

Anakin didn’t know what to say. Couldn’t say it. But he opened their bond and kissed Obi-Wan soundly. Let his emotions flow through them both.

Hours later, when they were both naked and exhausted, Obi-Wan found he didn’t regret a thing.

Chapter End Notes

ALL the things! Also please point out errors. I have an ancient and dying laptop. Like 8
of my keys don't work. Please give comments and prayers for the longevity of my computer. fun fact: Ahsoka's middle name, Ujasiri, is Swahili for 'brave'.
In early November training and studying had taken over life at Hogwarts. It seemed that the Prophet dropped bad news every day, from attacks to people being wrongfully imprisoned in Azkaban. Sometimes those imprisoned had children at Hogwarts. It was Obi-Wan’s idea to have weekly Common Room sleepovers, where the whole dorm would spend the evening talking and sleep in front of the fireplace. It seemed to help the younger students greatly. There was a pervasive sense that everything outside of Hogwarts was a dark unknown, but that here at least, things were safe.

Anakin frequently had dreams of Palpatine, though his Occlumency lessons with Professor Windu did help. Somehow having someone in his head was the worst thing he’d ever felt. It wasn’t like the gentle push and pull between his mind and Obi-Wan’s that was second nature to them now. He hated Legilimency, and Professor Windu understood. He said Aurors only performed it when a criminal was holding dangerous information. Anakin was making progress on building his mental shields and even deflecting to false information, but it was difficult and slow going. Professor Windu knew that he and the others were running dueling clubs, teaching all students to fight. He’d looked at Anakin for a very long time while he decided what to do with that information. Finally he’d simply turned and written a list. It was a list of books with spells common in dueling as well as some on techniques of famous duelists, rarer spells and curses as well. Anakin had checked all of them out of the library immediately. He’d only gotten one verbal warning from the man. That if anyone ended up at the Healer’s because of their little club, he would end it. He didn’t look particularly reassured when Anakin told him they’d only had to have Obi-Wan or Ahsoka heal an injury a few times.

By the beginning of December, his mental shielding was much better, as was that of his friends. He wasn’t a perfect Occlumens, but he was able to divert or hide information if he needed to. Simple things mostly but he was getting there. However it came at the cost of Mace Windu knowing nearly everything about him now. They’d been performing an exercise where Anakin would focus on one thing he wanted to hide, and hide it by turning it into a half-truth. It was one of his first attempts at doing so, and he’d gone with being an Animagus. After all he did want to hide it from people. However his half truth of owning a pet raven had buckled under his Professor’s expertise. It had been worth the look of stunned surprise.

“Third Year, Skywalker?! How in Merlin’s name did you pull that off?”

Anakin had shrugged, then explained how after the basilisk, he wanted to be able to fight or hide anyway possible. Plus what thirteen year old wouldn’t want to turn into an animal if they could? He also opined that adults at the school had a serious problem of underestimating the skills and ambitions of their charges. Mace had actually smiled at that last part. Sometimes Kanan sat in on their sessions. He was learning Legilimency from the DADA Professor, as well as Occlumency. Sometimes Ezra came too, which meant Obi-Wan came. Every now and then the four of them would duel. Kanan was incredible, having been trained most of his life, but he also had a natural talent. He could wield such an immense amount of power by barely focusing. Anakin wondered if he could feel magic as well. The Durmstrang graduate could even perform a fair share of wandless magic. A few times they had practiced together, Anakin performing transfigurations without wand and Kanan doing simple charms.

As Christmas approached, almost everyone was staying for the holiday. Which given the attacks, wasn’t unexpected. Anakin suggested Secret Santa for the Houses and after explaining the concept,
everyone loved it.

An almost fully packed Hogwarts over break meant extra time for dueling. The Teams held scrimmages nearly non-stop. And the Room of Requirement became an open secret. They held duels in classroom settings, forests, cities, towns, teaching each other new spells and defenses. There were also snowball fights and games of capture the flag where teams had to hold specific areas of the castle.

Christmas was beautiful, despite the threats from Death Eaters. Anakin got to wake up curled around Obi-Wan and by the time they got to their presents it was very late in the morning. Not having access to Hogsmeade meant sending for gifts by owl post. Anakin gave Obi-Wan a small ouroboros pendant. Silver and not overly-delicale or feminine, but easy enough to conceal. Obi-Wan gave him a blanket, hand-stitched and well worn, with a coat of arms on it. “It’s the symbol of my father’s family,” he explained. “It’s not expensive or anything but-”

Anakin kissed him. “You gave me something of your parents, of you. That’s worth everything. I’ll protect it.”

At Christmas dinner everyone seemed in good spirits. There was a full on Feast and staff sat with students. The older students were even permitted some of the scotch that the Professors had brought. Anakin and Obi-Wan noticed Professor Gallia getting very cozy with Madame Tachi. Kanan had even kissed Ezra under the mistletoe after desert, prompting a round of catcalls. Anakin had had a bit of the scotch, and he felt content, as though the school was finally a family, a home. And hadn’t that been what the Sorting Hat had promised him? A pathway to a home? Even if the family members involved did tend to hurl curses at each other on a regular basis. It was their home. After everyone had gone to bed, Anakin sat up with Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, Padmé, Barriss, Sola, Ezra, and Kanan. Professors Windu and Billaba were up, along with Qui-Gon, Avara, and the Headmaster.

Headmaster Yoda looked very content, the most that Anakin had ever seen him. He was wearing robes patterned in pine trees, a strange green-on-green pattern and a bright red hat. “There is warmth here. Not just in Hogwarts but in her community now. All of you have brought that here.” He gestured to the students gathered. “There are enemies outside of this place, but where they could have divided us easily years ago, that is no longer possible. Hogwarts is as she should be. United.” He then bowed to Anakin and his friends. “I know you are the Heirs, but you wouldn’t be without the capacity for selflessness, sacrifice, for building bonds. I wish I could say that the path ahead of you is easy, but you will be called to fight, sooner or later. We tried to preserve your childhoods, but we should have trusted in your instincts sooner. So now, and hopefully not too late, I can be honest with you.”

Anakin was concerned, listening intently with his friends to the Headmaster. “In the coming months, the Ministry will try and take Hogwarts. They learned their lesson with Tua. They will not come with incompetent bureaucrats. They will strike directly. They will send cruel, hardened agents of the Dark Lord. For now Hogwarts is safe, but they will find a way. Those as ruthless as Palpatine always do. Palpatine believes that Anakin is the key to his success. He will try to take Anakin again. He will try and kill you.” Yoda fixed Anakin with a direct stare. “You will need everything you have to protect yourselves. I hope that I am still here, and fighting with you. But nothing in a war can be guaranteed. You must learn how to harness your weapons and find what you must do with the crystal. We have been granted a brief time of joy, but I feel the darkness coming. Remember always, as you said, that you are the light.”

“Do you think we can save Hogwarts?” Barriss asked. “Really?”

“Hogwarts has never been as safe as the day all of you became friends.” The old Wizard said,
smiling sadly. Then he slowly made his way out of the Great Hall, staff clicking all the way.

“Know that all of us will be here as well,” Qui-Gon said, gesturing to himself and the three other Professors.

“One Dark Lord against four Heirs? He should be terrorized.” Ahsoka said.

“And his multitude of sadistic minions, but yeah,” Barriss replied sarcastically.

“We have our own army,” Obi-Wan said. “But we’ll need a plan to get the younger years to safety in the event of an assault on Hogwarts.”

“I have an idea about that,” Anakin said. “We can discuss it at their next training session.”

“Make sure to let us in on it,” Mace said dryly.

Anakin grinned. “Aye, aye Captain.”

They were sent off to bed, but going their separate ways after such a speech by Yoda didn’t feel right. So they went to the Room of Requirement. Padmé gave it direction, and the entered to find a cozy living room setup with a huge fireplace and several mattresses and pajama sets. There were even restrooms. Anakin and Obi-Wan curled up together, Kanan and Ezra to their right, Ahsoka and Padmé to their left. Sola and Barriss next to Kanan and Ezra. They slept peacefully, knowing they were with family.

When classes resumed it seemed all the joy of Winter Break was over. Obi-Wan was studying for hours each day for N.E.W.T.s. Anakin, Ahsoka, and Rex had taken over teaching the younger students’ dueling so he could study more. Interest in dueling took over the school. It seemed like hardly anyone cared about Quidditch in comparison. Though Anakin of course attended every game with a large poster of Barriss’ face, whether Slytherin was playing or not. Students not involved in the unofficial dueling practices were in the minority. Even Petro had come around. And he no longer made bigoted remarks, which Anakin considered serious progress. There were people like Sifo, Satine, and Riyo who refused to associate with them, but they could deal with that later.

In late January Anakin was walking back from a late running dueling practice. They’d gone with a forest scenario, brooms had been brought into play, and it had been chaotic but a good deal of fun.

He’d wondered if he’d left behind a list of spells for the younger years to practice. He’d turned around to go back, walking a few feet up the corridor, when his instincts told him to stop. Someone else was in front of the Room of Requirement. Anakin held still, hoping the shadows and his position of being just around the corner would conceal him. The person was pacing, opening up the room for a specific purpose. Anakin squinted. It was Sifo Dyas. He entered, and Anakin left. He wondered what business Dyas had in the Room of Requirement. Dyas exuded instability. Cad Bane had been bad, but Dyas had an energy that just seemed off. He’d been caught bullying a few times, but numbers of those invested in school unity currently prevented bullies from targeting people. He reminded Anakin of a student from his Muggle school who’d been caught torturing an injured squirrel once. And Dyas’ dueling style... raw power and nothing else. It was unsettling. Anakin returned to his dorm, wondering what Dyas was up to for several hours.

It was the worst time of the year. Again. Valentine’s Day. Anakin was sure he’d never feel good about the farce of a holiday. In Advanced Potions they were making Amortentia. It was supposed to
The potion smelled like the person one was in love with or what they loved most, and it was the most powerful love potion that one could legally brew. Anakin resented it. But he refused to not excel in his favorite subject. When he was done, Professor Tahl said it was perfect. He sniffed it cautiously. It smelled like spicy musk, old books, sweat after a duel, time spent under a cedar tree in a back yard, and...he smiled. Something a bit canine. The musk was the after shave Obi-Wan used. It was almost like having an out of body experience. He knew he loved Obi-Wan. He couldn’t remember a time of not knowing it, really. But to know he was in love him...it was heady. He felt something inside him shift, just a bit, in a good way. A surety clicking into place. He and Obi-Wan belonged together. Not because they were Heirs or had been paired up Anakin’s first year. Because they chose to be. Because they wanted it. He felt as if he could live a multitude of lifetimes and he’d choose Obi-Wan every time. He sat back down, smiling contentedly.

Then Riyo had to ruin it. “Professor, can we bottle these?”

“I’m afraid not, Ms.Chuchi. This is a controlled substance.”

“But we could sell them! Raise money for Houses or the school!”

Anakin was pissed. “That would be so unethical!” He nearly shouted.

“It’s for fun, it’s not unethical,” Riyo rolled her eyes at him.

“Anakin is correct,” Professor Tahl said. “Using this potion lightly is highly unethical. It creates a facsimile of infatuation or love, but it’s controlled because it is often used to take advantage of people in grievous ways.”

“How is inducing a fake crush taking advantage?” Another Gryffindor asked.

“It’s the same way as if you got someone so drunk that they couldn’t say no,” Anakin said. “If you take someone’s ability to consent away, it’s not fun, it’s assault.”

There was quiet at that. Anakin wanted to scream. The same people who thought they were superior to Muggles had no moral compass when it came to free will. He made sure that all the potions were properly disposed of. He trusted Professor Tahl, but consent was everything. Perhaps having been chained up by a Dark Lord at eleven had given him a clearer understanding on that.

Anakin was happy to storm out of class, but Daara held him back. When everyone else had left the hallway she spoke to him. “I just wanted to say thank you for what you said. I-I understand what it means to be violated and just...thanks.”

Anakin gave her a half smile. “No problem. Ready for the match this weekend?”

She grinned. “Oh you’re on, Skywalker.” And she walked off to her next class. Well, at least he’d helped someone feel better. And he was only slightly late for Charms.

He and Obi-Wan had agreed on no gifts that year for Valentine’s Day. There was too much going on. So instead they planned a mild prank. With help, of course. The evening post usually didn’t bring much. Except today it did. In the middle of dinner, loads of owls swooped in, some carrying unusual packages and some carrying howlers. An inordinate amount of howlers. The unusual packages were released without recipients, spraying glitter everywhere upon impact. (Anakin had been quite proud of engineering them himself.) The howlers were the best part though. Instead of berating statements, they screamed things like “I love your hair!”, “You’re really hot!”, “You’re my best friend!”. It went on for a solid half hour as many students had been happy to contribute. Glancing at the head table, Anakin thought Yoda looked truly overjoyed. Maybe he could learn to not hate this holiday after all.
Padmé was right. A lot of problems could be solved with massive quantities of glitter.

Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Barriss were teaching a group of students the Patronus Charm. It was a special session of students who wanted to learn it but were having problems. They’d been working together, discussing what true happiness meant to each student, meditating briefly. Then it was up to Anakin to demonstrate the wand movement. He explained the movement had to be part of the thought process. Visualize hurling the best parts of yourself at a dementor. Then he cast, and instead of his serpent, a wolf erupted, waiting for instruction. Anakin was stunned. So were Barriss and Obi-Wan, apparently. The other students just thought it was cool. After the lesson, Obi-Wan and Barriss stayed to talk to him about it.

“What was that?” Barriss asked immediately. “I know someone’s Patronus can change, but why yours and why now?”

Anakin blushed. “I think I um...need a few minutes with Obi-Wan.” He said quietly.

Barriss huffed but left them in privacy.

“So um, I think it was because of Valentine’s Day,” Anakin said.

“What do you mean? We didn’t even spend it doing anything together.” Obi-Wan looked amused.

“Well, in Advanced Potions we made Amortentia. And when I smelled my potion, it smelled like you. And I knew I loved you. But I think it made me realize that you’re...you’re everything. You’re home and family and love and friendship and not because we were assigned or are Heirs or any of it. Because it’s choice. And that’s more than blood, really. That no matter what happens in my life- sickness, health, kids, no kids, getting old, traveling, taking care of Qui-Gon and Avara when they’re old...every possible scenario in any possible world, I’d rather be in it with you than without you. And I think maybe I didn’t realize that until the moment I did.”


“All the way,” Anakin responded. They stood like that for a very long time, foreheads pressed together, unmoving.

Spring moved entirely too fast. Before Anakin knew it they were in mid-April. Obi-Wan was tense. N.E.W.T.s were the most stressful part of a student’s career at Hogwarts, though Anakin knew he’d do well.

When his boyfriend wasn’t studying, they were working on using their weapons as Heirs. Well, except Anakin. Calling on Suna for exercise drills seemed unfair to the basilisk. But he practiced summoning the Angfinitum.

Ahsoka and Padmé became very adept with their weapons. Anakin thought it interesting that of the Heirlooms were offensive and two were defensive. Thinking of defense reminded him of something he’d meant to do. He and Obi-Wan had an idea for getting younger students to safety inside the school if it was needed.

One afternoon he and Obi-Wan requested to meet with the Headmaster, Qui-Gon, Avara, Professor Billaba, and Professor Tahl. Obi-Wan started things off. “We suggest using The Chamber of Secrets.
If Hogwarts is attacked, all the younger students should line up at the second floor girl’s bathroom. Anakin will open it with Parseltongue and get them into the tunnel.”

“You want to hide children in the same area where a giant basilisk lives?” Professor Windu asked.

“Suna won’t wake up unless I tell her to,” Anakin pointed out. “Plus that makes it even better. Her job is to protect Hogwarts students.”

“And what would the exit strategy be?” Avara asked.

“Once things were safe, we’d send a few Professors to conjure stairs or ladders.” Obi-Wan said.

“Hm,” Yoda seemed to be considering it. “Yes, I think this is an excellent plan.”

“We should have drills, too,” Obi-Wan said. “So that there’s no confusion. There should be a signal or an alarm.”

Once it had been worked out, they did drill students on getting to and from the Chamber. The Headmaster created a spell for any staff or Heirs to use to signal an attack. At first people had been excited to see the Chamber, but after a dozen or so test runs, the novelty had worn off and students mostly resented going down the tunnel. He did get to see Suna again at least, and explain to frightened students that she’d been controlled by a Dark Wizard, and she’d never hurt anyone who lived at Hogwarts. He reverently touched her stony scales a few times, feeling the power under them. There was also an issue of students not wanting to go into the Chamber, but fight instead. Only those sixteen and up could choose to fight, as the Headmaster had decreed. But Anakin knew that some younger years might fight anyway, and that it could be catastrophic.

On the first of April at midnight, Anakin was meditating in his Common Room. No one else was up, which made it ideal. He was wearing Obi-Wan’s Hufflepuff sweatpants and an old t-shirt. He hated trying to meditate with a tie and vest on. It was maddening.

He was drifting, trying clear his mind of anxieties and the nightmares he was having lately. He felt something tug at his mind. Something he’d never felt before. He allowed himself to follow it. He saw a clearing in the Forbidden Forest. There were Death Eaters chanting. In the center was Obi-Wan, bound and with several bruises and cuts. He could feel the heat of the fire that one of the Death Eaters had conjured. He could feel Palpatine’s presence. A Death Eater lifted their head, pulled back their hood, and there he was. Palpatine, wearing Ajunta Paal’s body. There was something horrifying about seeing the Dark Lord’s eyes from behind the skull of a man who was effectively dead. Palpatine grinned, raised his wand to Obi-Wan.

Anakin woke up, covered in sweat and screaming, his scar feeling like an open wound. He reached for Obi-Wan as he left his Common Room, running through the empty corridors and to Obi-Wan’s room. He wasn’t getting an answer through their bond. He couldn’t panic though. Obi-Wan might need him. He slowed as felt Obi-Wan’s sleepy presence answer back in his mind, finally. He slid into the Hufflepuff’s room, hugging him tightly, casting a Revealio just in case.

“Anakin, what’s wrong?” His panic was causing Obi-Wan to panic as well.

“It’s okay,” he panted, still hugging the auburn-haired man tightly. “I had a vision. But not a real one. I think Palpatine was trying to bait me.” It had felt so real. The heat from the fire, the smell of the forest. Obi-Wan hugged him back.

“We should tell Qui-Gon. It could mean something bad is coming.”

Anakin nodded, and soon the two young men were in front of Qui-Gon’s door. He answered bleary-
eyed, gesturing for them to come in.

After Anakin told him what had happened, Qui-Gon firecalled Professor Windu. Somehow, Anakin wondered, they ended up with half the Hogwarts staff, including the Headmaster, in Qui-Gon’s living room at one in the morning. Professor Windu had gone with Professor Billaba to scout the area of the forest that Anakin described. Anakin was holding a mug of hot chocolate, sitting on Qui-Gon’s couch with Obi-Wan, and listening to Yoda. The Headmaster was glad that Anakin had checked before rushing out into the Forbidden Forest alone, but if this failed to work, it could mean that Palpatine would try something else soon.

Around two in the morning Mace and Depa returned. Depa was cradling her arm. They’d found four Death Eaters waiting, but had defeated them. No kills but they had run off after realizing that Anakin wasn’t making an appearance. Mace had his arms around Depa, saying he’d wake Madame Che to see about her arm, despite her protests.

Anakin and Obi-Wan clung to each other, knowing what they could have lost if Anakin hadn’t been trained or had been more reckless. Finally, they were dismissed and went back to Obi-Wan’s room. Anakin found Artoo already waiting for them. He scratched her head softly and she curled into his chest as Obi-Wan curled around his back. He didn’t sleep much after the scare, but he knew they were safe for now at least.

A few days later Dyas approached Anakin in the Common Room. Anakin was in the middle of an essay on the theory of energy convergence behind heat related Charms. There weren’t many people in the Common Room as it was once again late.

Dyas took the chair opposite Anakin, where Barriss usually sat while they did homework together.

“Heard you had a nasty nightmare not too long ago,” he smirked. “I’ve heard Dreamless Sleeping potions can help with that.”

Anakin felt his blood chill at the insinuation. “I can handle bad dreams.” He countered, trying to keep his voice even.

“You know, if you’d been raised properly, everything could be different. You could be on the right side of this war.”

“The side that murders innocent people? I don’t think so.”

“You could be so much stronger,” Dyas continued. “So much more powerful.”

Anakin had to laugh mirthlessly at that. “And you hate that I’m strong, don’t you? I made something greater than myself while people like you play lapdog for a mad man, hoping to catch some of his table scraps. There’s nothing ambitious or cunning about hiding behind a mask and hurting people. It’s just something cowards do.”

Something murderous flared in Dyas’ eyes. Anakin gripped his wand under the table in case. But Dyas seemed to calm down, realizing he wasn’t in a place to win any kind of confrontation. “Be careful about those nightmares,” he said standing up. “I hear over time they can get worse.” He sauntered off to his dorm.

Anakin didn’t know what to make of the encounter. He told his friends about it, but Dyas hadn’t actually made a threat or given any information. So for now he had to wait. He asked Threepio to keep an eye on the 7th Year. She said he frequently went to the Room of Requirement after curfew,
and sometimes to the Forbidden Forest. But she couldn’t travel there, as the risk of predators was too great for her.

Spring wore on and soon it was mid May. Obi-Wan had thankfully slowed down on his studying, figuring that by now if he didn’t know material, there wasn’t much he could do about it.

Anakin spent most nights with him, hating that Obi-Wan wouldn’t be at school the following year. After his exams he planned on applying for a few programs. One would be the Auror training program. They’d already made plans for the summer. Owen’s wedding would be the second week of July. They’d stay with him until the wedding, then go to Qui-Gon’s. They’d have a week in August at the Amidala estate. It sounded wonderful but threat of Palpatine seemed to cloud everything else.

N.E.W.T.s started, and Obi-Wan was in exams for most of the day, while everyone aside from Fifth and Seventh years had a reading week before their regular end of year exams.

Anakin was in the library, researching crystals once again with Ahsoka, when they heard it. The alarm. The one that meant an assault. They exchanged glances and nodded, heading off in their own directions. Anakin made it to the girls’ bathroom and some younger students were already there. Most seemed calm, thinking it a drill, but Anakin new it wasn’t. They wouldn’t drill while exams took place. He made sure Eevee was there, along with all the Slytherins under fifteen he knew of. Professor Billaba came as backup, ushering students into the open tunnel. When the younger students saw Fifth Years who had been taking their O.W.L.s looking scared headed towards the tunnel, they knew something was very wrong.

“That’s all the Fifth Years sitting exams,” Professor Billaba said. Kat Ooni reported that everyone from Hufflepuff in the dorms and Common Room had been cleared out. Sola came by, ushering the last of the Ravenclaws, And soon Ahsoka and Barriss followed. Once everyone was in, Anakin sealed the entrance. Then he summoned the Angfinitum, noticing his friends were already armed.

The looked at each other and split up, finding the source of the alarm. Within minutes Padmé had signaled through their bracelets that Great Hall was under attack. Sola sent a message right after saying the South turret on third floor was also now a war zone. He and Ahsoka nodded, agreeing silently to split up. Anakin ran, wand at the ready for the Great Hall. He rounded the corner with a shield already up. Dyas was there, on top of a table, casting Crucio on Daara. Anakin stunned him. But there were other Death Eaters. Almost all of them wore masks. Padme got to the Great Hall as well.

Anakin just had time to defend against a Crucio as one of the masked assailants attacked him. He counted at least ten Death Eaters in the Great Hall. And there was no counting how many might be elsewhere. After he dispatched of his current opponent, he put his hand on the Angfinitum in his pocket. He called to Suna through the magic. Told her that Hogwarts was under attack, and she had a purpose to serve. He felt her wake, felt her fury at the attackers and the students being forced into hiding from them.

He hoped she’d make it to the Great Hall soon. Dyas was up, someone having ennervated him. He tried to hit Anakin with a Confringo but Anakin blocked. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Ahsoka use her brightly glowing twin daggers to mortally wound Death Eater. His only thought was ‘good’. He realized they wouldn’t win this with defensive spells. He wouldn’t use an Unforgivable and put his soul at risk, but he would kill if he had to. If killing someone like Dyas meant that someone like Barriss or Sola lived, it wasn’t even a question.

He was facing two opponents at the moment, but he’d trained for that. He bodily threw one into another with a spell, then bound them. Another Death Eater was about to free them. Anakin hurled a chunk of rock that been blasted off the wall into the Death Eater’s head. He knew he’d just killed
someone, but he was unmoved. He’d killed someone who’d come here, to his home, to kill children.

Daara was doing well against one of the masked cowards, and he was proud as she and Barriss made a team effort to permanently immobilize the person by crushing them under the weight of one of the tables. Padmé speared the person she was fighting, then blasted the floor with the hilt of her spear, taking out the remaining Death Eaters. It stunned them but not for long enough. Anakin blocked a Crucio directed his way, then cast Sectumsempra at his opponent. Finally Suna showed up.

The giant basilisk slid into the hall, and hexes seemed to simply bounce off of her. She bit a Death Eater near Barriss, who had thankfully remembered to not look at Suna’s eyes. Suna petrified the remaining Death Eaters that Padmé had stunned, and Anakin and Barriss levitated the bodies then dropped them, the pieces scattering and ensuring their lives were ended. The Great Hall being secure for the moment, Anakin and the others headed to where Sola had said there was still fighting.

Obi-Wan had his Aegis, and he was protecting three wounded students behind him. They were almost backed against the wall. It was just him and Sola fending them off. Ahsoka let out what could only be a war cry which distracted the Death Eaters and gave her the seconds she needed to get close enough to slash with her blades. Barriss took one of them on, casting a powerful curse at the lithe figure in the mask.

They dueled down the hallway, Barriss parrying and striking, holding her ground. Anakin heard the person, a woman, start laughing. And Barriss froze. The mask came off. Kahst Offee, Barriss’ mother, was attacking her own daughter. “How fitting that our relationship ends like this,” the woman said. “But then again, you always were a disappointment.” She hurled a Confringo at Barriss, who dodged. Barriss was radiating anger. Anakin knew he had to let her handle this alone though. Barriss used her defensive blade spell, focused on her shield, and ran towards her mother, eyes blazing with fury. Time seemed to stop as Kahst cast Avada Kedavra against her own daughter. Barriss was surprised, but she was already in position. She deflected, and her mother crumpled. Barriss stood for a moment, not feeling the tears on her own cheeks. When she looked up Anakin saw the despair in her eyes. But then she shook her head, and went back to incapacitating the rest of the Death Eaters. With Ahsoka’s blades and Padmé’s spear it didn’t take long. Anakin could feel Suna chasing intruders on the first floor.

Where were they coming from? Suddenly Anakin realized. The Room of Requirement and Sifo Dyas. He took off, his friends following. Windu and Qui-Gon were already there, fighting in front of the Room of Requirement in the wide corridor. Obi-Wan saw a Crucio headed for Windu, caught it with his shield just in time. Professor Billaba soon arrived, a small fleet of desks in front of her. It didn’t take them long to take care of the remaining Death Eaters. Then Padmé opened the Room. Inside was a rather beaten-looking cupboard.

Mace seemed to know what it was. “This is how they got in,” he said with finality, then set the thing on fire.

“Skywalker and Kenobi, come with me and we'll take the dungeons and first floor. Jinn, you, Depa, and Tano should take the second floor. Offee, you and the Amidalas should take the third and fourth floors. Kolar and Gallia are already on the top floors. Send your Patroni if an area is clear or if you need back up.”

Everyone nodded and they were off again. Anakin and Obi-Wan silently headed to the dungeons with Professor Windu. They did a sweep of the Potions classroom and the Slytherin Common room, then went farther into the dungeons. Everything seemed all clear. Anakin reached out through the magic to verify.

Then they moved back through the first floor. Anakin found a few Death Eater bodies that Suna had
petrified. Professor Windu shattered them before Anakin could do it. Finally Anakin sent his wolf Patronus out to tell the others that the dungeons and first floor were all clear.

Padmé’s Eagle told them the same story, except they had rounded up all the surviving Death Eaters, five or so plus Dyas, and had them in a classroom. Anakin couldn’t believe how fast it had all happened. They got the all clear from everyone else, and then gathered as Aurors finally showed up to take the remaining Death Eaters to holding for trial. Hell, the Daily Prophet got there at the same time as the Aurors. If that wasn’t telling of the administration, he didn’t know what was.

The Healer’s Ward was where everything felt like it was finally over. Like he wasn’t still in battle mode. Ezra had been one of the wounded that Obi-Wan protected. He and a few others were being seen to by Madame Che. Sola and Barriss were just sitting outside against the stone wall, parts of it blasted off. Barriss was staring at nothing. Anakin couldn’t imagine how she felt. The younger students were being settled in their Common Rooms by the their Heads of House. But there would be an all school assembly at some point. There were no student casualties though, or staff casualties. Anakin counted that as a win.

He sat with Obi-Wan, Kanan, and Ezra as all their minor wounds were looked at. Well, Ezra would take a few days for his arm to heal, but he’d be fine. Then they made for the Great Hall. It was so strange that only hours ago he’d been fighting for his life in here. He looked at the table that he knew had been used to crush a Death Eater. It was upright already, nothing looking out of place except a few chunks from walls and ceilings here and there. Avara led Slytherin House into the Great Hall. Ezra and Eevee embraced tightly. There were many tearful reunions as the other Houses filtered in and students left the Chamber. Eventually everyone who had fought were exchanging stories. People were perking up, coming out of the numbness of post-battle. Anakin spoke when asked about it, but he didn’t say much. He, Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, Padmé, and Barriss had been through a lot. They’d made life and death decisions. Barriss especially.

Finally the Headmaster appeared at head table and approached the podium.

“We faced more trauma today than Hogwarts has seen in many years. And we survived. We outshone the darkness. Battle may change you, but you are strong, resilient, and Hogwarts is safe because of you. Parents will be coming soon, wanting to check in on their children. Reporters, too, will be here, but Professors will handle them. Tonight, everyone, including staff will sleep in the Great Hall.” Anakin appreciated the sentiment but just wanted to curl up with Obi-Wan in privacy.

Eventually, food appeared. Then parents and more reporters. Yoda and Professor Windu led the reporters outside for a makeshift press conference.

Anakin looked around at all families embracing. He hugged Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka hugged them both, and pretty soon they were all hugging like some kind of dog pile. Fatigue hit Anakin then. Everything he’d done after the fighting was such a haze. He’d gotten Suna back to her Chamber and said a bittersweet goodbye to her, checked on his House, the Healing wing, then the Great Hall. He was bone tired.

He was going to see if he could sneak off with Obi-Wan, but then he heard Ahsoka cry out “Mom!” Ashla picked her daughter up in a tight hug.

Then Sola’s parents came. Padmé sat with them, but Sola stayed with Barriss, who was still in shock.

The Amidalas thanked Anakin and Obi-Wan, and Rex and Cody and Daara and everyone else who had fought.

Ashla said she’d never been so torn between being proud and terrified that her daughter had fought
Death Eaters and won.

Eventually the war stories subsided, the press left, and the parents, and it was just Hogwarts again. People were joking that this should mean everyone aced all their O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s.

Obi-Wan asked Qui-Gon if their presence would be missed if they didn’t sleep in the Great Hall and Qui-Gon said he’d cover for them.

Then finally it was just him and Obi-Wan. They undressed and got in bed. And Anakin wasn’t sure who started first, but they cried. For the things that had almost happened. For the fact that this wasn’t over. For Barriss and the terrible position she’d been put in. For knowing that something worse was coming. For now knowing what it was to take a life. When they both subsided, they slept finally, long into the next day.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will deal with the fall out and repercussions of the attack. Also had to put stuff in there about Amortentia being nine kinds of unethical. I'm pretty sure it's called rohypnol. That always bothered me that Wizarding world was so ok with that stuff.
The day after the attack was a kind of limbo. Exams were still postponed. People were still trying to wrap their heads around all of it. Roughly twenty Death Eaters had made it into the castle. They’d apparently been expecting no real fight. Honestly, everyone knew the Heirs had been called. That they’d sought to take Hogwarts with twenty people was absurd. Though perhaps Dyas had meant to let many more into the castle with that cupboard.

“I can feel you thinking,” Obi-Wan said, curled into his chest on the bed.

“There’s so much going on. So much at risk now. The Headmaster was right. They won’t give up. Something else will happen. This feels like a test. Like ever since First Year he’s just been testing me, and every time I pass it means the next thing will be more horrible and harder to survive.”

“They won’t give up, but neither will we. We’ll figure out the crystal. We’ll protect each other.”

Anakin tightened his hold. “You’re right. And I guess we should get on that. Talk to Qui-Gon and the Headmaster, think of how else we can make Hogwarts safe. Actually...I think this attack was timed.” The thought struck Anakin has a bit absurd at first but more plausible by the second.

“There were fewer attacks over Christmas because everyone stayed. And that’s how Palpatine and Dooku are leveraging a lot of people, right? With the safety of their children. By attacking at the end of term, as we’re all about to go home, he’s ensuring that students will go home for the summer. Where they’ll be vulnerable.”

Obi-Wan felt the idea sit in stomach like a rock. He couldn’t deny the how likely it might be though.

“We need to go find Qui-Gon and Yoda right now, don’t we?” He burrowed into the strong chest.

“Yes, we really do.” Anakin kissed the top of his head, hating they had to run off already from their nest.

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Anakin thought half-hysterically that his first project when he actually had time to become the first Wizard to blend magic and technology would be to equip Hogwarts with some kind of Tony Stark, “Avengers Assemble” system.

It took over an hour but he was in Yoda’s office with Obi-Wan, Padmé, Ahsoka, Qui-Gon, Avara, Windu, and Depa Billaba.

He’d just explained the timing he theorized. Ahsoka was furious, which meant she agreed with him. She’d been nearly tortured by Death Eaters not too long ago, and the idea that other students were being set up for that fate was an abomination to her. Yoda considered his words carefully. “That would make sense. And with a smaller scale assault, even if they didn’t win, they could learn much about our systems and how we would handle such a scenario. But this is very serious. If we believe, truly, that sending students home would be dangerous, our only option is to keep them here. The Ministry will forbid it, and if we deny them it will be considered an act of treason.”

“I for one, vote that we encourage families to keep their children here,” Qui-Gon said. “It will be
considered either an act of treason or of war, or both, but that’s where this was always headed. We knew war would happen, eventually. We’ve proven we can keep people safe here. Safer than they’d be in their homes or on the run. Especially given our current intel.”

“What intel is that?” Padmé asked, clearly unhappy it hadn’t been run by here.

Qui-Gon sighed. “Plo Koon has found out that Palpatine has recruited several werewolf packs to his cause.”

“Why weren’t we told?” Ahsoka asked. “We should have known! We could have been making wolfsbane bombs or something!”

“I’m sorry,” Qui-Gon said. “I wanted to tell you but I was outvoted.”

Anakin shook his head in confusion. “Outvoted by who? Who is voting on whether or not the people involved with defending Hogwarts should be given important information?” He was becoming angry. He had killed people, risked himself and those he loved and something was kept from them?

Qui-Gon gave the Headmaster a pointed look. Yoda sighed. “There is an Order. Of those stood against the last Dark Lord when I was barely older than you and fought the Dark Lord Plagueis. And since then it has existed, to keep watch against the Dark. The Order was once great but now it exists in secrecy among only a few. In truth, your own Order, The Lumos Imperious, is greater now that the Order of the Phoenix.”

Anakin tried not to yell. But he’d thought after the Headmaster’s speech to them on Christmas that they were trusted. At least the four of them.

“It doesn’t matter if The Lumos Imperious is larger!” Padmé was yelling for him. That was very kind of her. “We deserved to know that information the second you had it! I’m not just putting my life on the line for Hogwarts. If something had happened to Sola and it had been because of something you kept from us, all of you would be running scared right now. Either we’re a united front or we’re not!”

The Headmaster sighed. “You are correct. The magnitude of what might happen had never been clear to me. And that is no excuse. From now on you will be included at all meeting of the Order of the Phoenix. All of you.”

Anakin could feel Obi-Wan’s hurt. Qui-Gon had never told him and he’d trusted Qui-Gon implicitly.

“Though seeing as the meetings will likely need to be held here now, that shouldn’t be a problem.” Professor Windu said.

Qui-Gon nodded. “It’s not just children who will be staying here, but we’ll have to invite families as well. Make Hogwarts and Hogsmeade the center of the opposition to Palpatine. That means Order members aren’t safe either.”

“We’re not just a school anymore,” Ahsoka muttered. “We’re a stronghold.”

“We’ll need to do stronger warding around Hogsmeade. Have an evacuation plan in case there’s a large scale assault. Have our people in the Aurors pull out and defend Hogsmeade instead.” Professor Billaba said.

“Seventh years can patrol the grounds between here and Hogsmeade and the Forbidden Forest if extra hands are needed,” Professor Windu said.
“Now would not be a good time to tell students what we will and will not be doing,” Obi-Wan said darkly.

“Agreed,” Anakin said. “Not your training, not your troops. We’ll talk to the people we fought beside and get a feel for how they think about it.”

“I voted to tell you as well.” Professor Windu said defensively.

“Yes, but you could’ve give us that information anyway.” Padmé said. “You can’t decide that students can risk their lives and then say that what they know about the people trying to kill them should be censored. We will talk to The Lumos Imperious.” She took a deep breath. “We’ll need an address from all of you tonight about the importance of keeping students here over the summer. You’ll need whatever Aurors you have standing up on that stage with you, endorsing it. And you’ll need us. People believe in us, especially since Ahsoka basically claimed her Heir status at a semi-public event. Then, once everyone is on the same page about fortifying Hogwarts, who else should be brought in and why, we can talk about increasing security measures.”

Anakin, Ahsoka, and Obi-Wan all straightened at that, nodding in agreement.

The Headmaster nodded. “Yes, that is the most logical way to do things.”

“And we need to meet with this Order as soon as possible. I want to talk to individual members about intel and what constitutes a need-to-know basis.” Coming from Padmé that sounded like a threat. It was, honestly.

The staff in the room all look humbled as Anakin and his friends left. They went straight to the Room of Requirement. Padmé unlocked it and there was an eerily impressive array of punching bags and weaponry inside it.

“I killed people! Barriss had to kill her own mother! And they wouldn’t tell us?!” Ahsoka was livid. “Hey kids, thanks for the training, the procedures, and being Heirs while putting your lives at risk. By the way, any of you could have been turned into a werewolf out there.” She threw a punch at one of the bags.

“Qui-Gon is my family, and I’d never even heard of the Order,” Obi-Wan said sadly.

Anakin put an arm around his waist. “I’ve been fighting the Dark since I was eleven, and I didn’t either. Padmé stayed on a year in part because she felt it was her duty, and still…” He trailed off angrily.

“I hate to say it but we should focus on the now,” Padmé said. “There is a lot to do today, and we’re losing daylight. We can be pissed at them but they’re still part of Hogwarts.”

“Our Order is better anyway,” Ahsoka scoffed petulantly.

Anakin gave her a rueful smile.

“At least my mom can stay here with me,” she continued. “I don’t have to worry about someone tracking her down in Nairobi in order to hurt me.”

“We should all get our families here as soon as possible,” Padmé agreed. “I mean, my parents are trying to fight Dooku with the law but that’s clearly not an effective route. I’d rather them be here.”

“I should get Owen and Beru here soon, too.” Anakin agreed. “They have some protection from being family but yeah, better that they be here.”
Before Anakin firecalled Owen, however, he wanted to check in on Barriss. He went back to the Slytherin dorm as the others got busy with arrangements. Sola was in the Common Room, arms curled around her legs. She looked up as Anakin came in. “She’s in her bed,” Sola said with puffy eyes. “But she won’t come out and I can’t go in there without being escorted by a girl in Slytherin. Plus I’m scared. I don’t know how to help her.”

Anakin sat down and hugged Sola to him. He pushed her dark hair out of her eyes. “It’s okay. I’ll go in. I’ll see if I can get her at least sitting up, then maybe you can take over and stay with her.” Sola nodded in his arms.

He got up and approached the Sixth Year girls’ dorm. He’d never had a reason to be in there before. The archway would push back any boys trying to enter with a strong gust of wind. He stopped before the archway, looking the snakes carved into the stonework. ‘Pleassse,’ He hissed. ‘My sssisssster needssss help.” The stone felt warm under his hands, and he passed through just fine. He went for the only bed with the curtains closed around it. He put his hand up to the material. “Barriss?” He called gently. “It’s me. Please, can I at least see you?” He waited a couple of minutes. Finally the left side curtain came open. Barriss was sitting in the center of her bed, arm pulled around her knees just like Sola was out in the Common Room. He’d rarely seen her without her headscarf. But her hair was in a messy braid, her eyes were bloodshot and although she was no longer crying she was still shaking.

“Can I sit?” He asked. She nodded hesitantly. He sat on the edge of her bed and she leaned into him. They just sat like that for a long while.

“I hated her so much.” Barriss’ voice sounded raw. “She was horrible to me, and to my father. But especially to me. She always told me I was never enough. I was never strong enough or smart enough or pretty enough. When I was five my father got me a pet rabbit. I loved her. I named her Celer because I thought it would impress her because it was Latin. One day she was yelling about how I wasn’t doing enough to prove that I had magic yet. I yelled back. And she got this like on her face. And I knew what she was going to do. I begged her, sobbed, pleaded. And she used that gods-damned Killing Curse on my rabbit. And I knew then. That that’s what she’d do to anyone I ever loved.” Barriss sobbed. “I knew she’d kill Sola before she killed me if she got a chance, just to prove her point. That’s why I knew I had to...kill her first. That’s why I engaged her. I didn’t care so much that she said she’d kill me. I thought I’d deflect whatever she threw at me. I was so disposable to her, in the end. But she threw all of her hate for me right at me, and I used it to kill her instead. I never wanted to be a monster like her.”

“You’re not a monster. You’re the furthest thing from it. You loved someone so much that you were willing to sacrifice yourself for them. You didn’t cast and Unforgivable. Your soul is still all you. All the bravery you’ve shown, the cunning, the loyalty to the people you care about. And you’re kind. I’ve seen you with the smaller students. You make them feel safe, you joke with them. You’ve stayed up late with first years who were scared. We got each other ridiculous gifts and fooled half the school by being each other’s beards. A cruel person would never do that, only a compassionate one. And you fight so hard all the time. You fight for Hogwarts, for your friends. You risked your family’s wrath for Sola.” He hugged her hard. “I’m sorry you lost your mother. And for how it happened. But thank you for being part of my family.” Barriss hugged him back, clinging tightly and crying. Anakin lost track of time but when she stopped, she seemed to feel a bit better.

“You’re not a monster. You’re the furthest thing from it. You loved someone so much that you were willing to sacrifice yourself for them. You didn’t cast and Unforgivable. Your soul is still all you. All the bravery you’ve shown, the cunning, the loyalty to the people you care about. And you’re kind. I’ve seen you with the smaller students. You make them feel safe, you joke with them. You’ve stayed up late with first years who were scared. We got each other ridiculous gifts and fooled half the school by being each other’s beards. A cruel person would never do that, only a compassionate one. And you fight so hard all the time. You fight for Hogwarts, for your friends. You risked your family’s wrath for Sola.” He hugged her hard. “I’m sorry you lost your mother. And for how it happened. But thank you for being part of my family.” Barriss hugged him back, clinging tightly and crying. Anakin lost track of time but when she stopped, she seemed to feel a bit better.

“Sola’s outside waiting for you. Want me to bring her in?”

Barriss nodded and Anakin kissed her forehead. “I have to go help with efforts to get families here. It looks like Hogwarts is about to become a war-time hold. Students aren’t going to go home, if we can
help it. We think the attack was timed to ensure they did. But if you need anything, bracelet, Patronus, however you get the message out, just let me know.”

Barriss nodded again. Anakin left, and told Sola she could come through. He stood halfway in the archway and pulled her through without an issue.

“Stay in contact, let me know if either of you need anything.” Sola nodded and went to embrace her girlfriend.

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It was nearly four in the afternoon. Which meant the after-dinner assembly would be soon. He ran into Ruwee Amidala in the corridor on his way to Obi-Wan’s room. The Gringott’s Council member stopped him. “Is it true, what my daughter says? About bringing families here? I’m on my way to discuss things with the Deputy Headmaster but is that the plan?”

“Yes. There’s going to be an assembly after dinner. You and some of the press will be invited, I’m sure. But it’s the safest option. We fended off an attack here with zero casualties so it’s the best bet for a lot of people.” Anakin confirmed.

“These are dark days, indeed,” Mr. Amidala sighed. “Thank you, again. It isn’t right of us to ask our young people for so much.”

“Padmé and I have a duty as Heirs, but the many of us understand that choosing not to fight for the light is just as bad as choosing to fight for the dark.”

Mr. Amidala nodded and continued on his way.

Anakin finally made it to Obi-Wan’s room.

“How’s Barriss?” He asked.

“She’s...better. She’ll be okay, I think. I hope.” They embraced. Anakin kissed his boyfriend lightly on the mouth. “I should call Owen and Beru. Let them know to pack their bags.” Obi-Wan nodded and stood back. Anakin used a bit of powder to make the call.

“Owen? Are you there?” It took a few minutes but Owen’s face appeared in the flames.

“Ani! Are you alright?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Take it you heard we were attacked?”

“Yeah. Some Aurors came by, asked us to pack some bags. Apparently we’ll be heading to Hogwarts shortly.” Good, Anakin thought. At least someone had been on it. Likely Padmé.

“Yeah, I think we’re in for some tough times. But it’s safer for you here.”

“I understand,” Owen said. “Can’t imagine what I’d do to hide you if people started up witch hunts. See you soon then?”

“Definitely,” Anakin said.

Alright, kid. Stay safe.”

“You too.”
Anakin ended the call. He wanted to down a Sleeping Draught and wake up when this was over. But he was pretty hungry, and the sooner this assembly was over the sooner he and Obi-Wan could go back to curling up somewhere together. Although…

“We should call a meeting tonight. Just Heirs, after the assembly. Get this crystal figured out before there’s another attack.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I’ll tell Ahsoka and Padmé. I’m going to have a heart to heart with Qui-Gon that I’m not looking forward to. But I’ll find them first. You should rest up. You look awful.”

“Thanks for that,” Anakin huffed.

“You look tired. You know I think you’re sexy even with you’re exhausted. But sleep here, until dinner. I know you hardly slept at all last night.” Anakin admitted he did need the rest he set and set alarm with his wand. He settled into bed as Obi-Wan headed out.

Anakin woke all too soon. The two hour nap had felt like barely anything. He stood and stretched, combed through his hair a bit and put on his school robes once more. Dinner. He just had to get through dinner, then the assembly, then the meeting. Then he could sleep again. Preferably for ten hours.

The Great Hall was already crowded as he sat between Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. Students were scattered among all the tables, some with families already there from the previous night. All five tables were packed. At the head table, a handful of reporters and people Anakin didn’t recognize sat with staff. Dinner itself was a short enough affair. Food appeared, many were like Anakin and hadn’t eaten since the attack the day before so there was little conversation from some quarters.

Before long Headmaster Yoda stepped up to his podium and silence fell. Anakin, Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, and Padmé rose and walked to the head table, standing behind the elderly wizard.

The Headmaster began without much preamble. “Yesterday Hogwarts faced a direct attack. The attack was against the staff, the students, and what the very institution of Hogwarts means. Dark Wizards, aided by a Seventh Year student who is in Auror custody, invaded our home. They meant to threaten, harm and kill anyone they might find here. We don’t what they would have done had they been victorious in taking the school. We also believe that the attack was timed to spark fear in students, and make sure they go home over the summer break.” Murmurs had erupted all over the halls, but the Headmaster continued. “So it is the recommendation of Hogwarts staff that students stay over the summer. We also invite families to stay here or in Hogsmeade, where accommodations are being made.” The murmurs turned to loud questions and objections. The Headmaster called for silence, and then sent off the alarm signal he’d created for an attack. A very unpleasant sound emitted from the walls. It was effective crowd control.

He cancelled it and spoke again. “We know that the Minister will condemn this action, and see it as a sign of treason or as an act of war. But we believe that Hogwarts is the best place to keep students safe. Those who wish to take their children home will of course be free to do so. And we have all known, for a long time, that this was coming. Some of us turned our heads so as not to see what has been happening, but now it is here. What happened yesterday is the first battle of a war. And we did not draw first blood. Hogwarts has always been a sanctuary to all, and we will keep it that way. In a few days’ time we will release information for those wishing to stay with us here or in Hogsmeade. We will also make sure The Prophet prints that information. Whether staying is the right choice for a student or family is not for me to say. The times ahead of us will not be easy. We will protect students, but we will also have to fight. For those above the age of Majority, staying with us means
fighting for us.”

People were still panicky. Anakin could taste it in the air. He tapped the Headmaster on the shoulder and gestured towards the podium. Yoda nodded and stepped down, and Anakin pushed the platform he used out of the way.

“Excuse me,” he said loudly. People quieted again. “I’m sure most of you know who I am. I’m the son of Lucan and Shmi Skywalker. The Dark Lord Palpatine gave me this scar.” He gestured to his right eye. “And yesterday, he sent twenty Death Eaters here to kill, injure, and terrorize students. And we fought. We fought back without a single casualty, though we killed many. We had a plan in place, we got everyone under sixteen into hiding, and we went into battle, taking Wizards much older and more experienced than us on admirably.” He paused, knowing he had to do more than say that people could fight. “I am the Heir of Slytherin. Yet when I came here I had nothing. Hogwarts is my home, our home. Here I gained friendship, acceptance, and love. Almost everyone here who isn’t a student called it home at one point, too. I’m asking people who are willing, not as an Heir and not as a Skywalker, to fight for this home.”

The crowd was silent. Anakin felt Padmé step up beside him and stepped aside to let her speak.

“We understand that this may feel sudden, but in many ways it isn’t. The attacks on those of us who believe that blood doesn’t make someone more entitled to use magic have been occurring for years. This feels more sudden because it’s here now and impossible to look away from. Where everyone is supposed to always be safe. But that’s who we’re dealing with. People who will kill children. People like Minister Dooku who don’t even consider non-purebloods to be people. Yesterday we risked our lives for the people inside these walls. And for the walls themselves. We kept everyone under the age of consent safe. We trained, made plans, made contingency plans. And we remembered to care for each other. Now, with a Ministry that could do more damage not just to our towns but to our world than any before it, we ask you to stand by us. The Aurors you see behind me support this stance, as do many of the students and staff here. We can’t afford to treat this as an isolated incident. We’ve stood by for too long, keeping our heads down, hoping that we could scrape by while other people were hurt. But no more. Today, we fight.”

Anakin could feel the mood shifting from one of confusion and anger to one of acceptance. He wanted to grin at Padmé but knew it wasn’t the time. Still, a Slytherin and a Ravenclaw working a room together could yield some pretty phenomenal results.

Professor Windu took the podium. “It’s getting late and I know some of you still need to make arrangements for the night. And our students need to get back to their dorms. So, if you’ll please wait in the Hall a Professor can help you with that. But we ask those of you who don’t need to be here to please return to your dorms.” Some students were moving out, making the Hall feel more breathable.

Windu stepped into the crowd and was immediately swarmed by worried parents. Speaking, of Anakin thought, he needed to find Owen and Beru. Padmé was on her way to talk to her parents but Anakin stopped her with a hand on her shoulder. “Do you know where Owen is?” Padmé looked confused.

“No, why would I?”

“Nothing. He said Aurors were bringing him and Beru here. I figured you’d organized it. I’ll ask Qui-Gon.” Padmé nodded and Anakin spotted Qui-Gon, speaking with Kat Ooni and her mother. Qui-Gon turned to him. He was still pissed on Obi-Wan’s behalf, but he needed to find Owen.

“Do you know where Owen is? He should be here by now.”
Qui-Gon frowned. “I haven’t heard from your cousin. When did you last speak to him?”

Something dark took hold of Anakin’s heart. “I firecalled him a couple of hours before dinner. He said Aurors had arrived and were taking him and Beru to Hogwarts.”

“I wasn’t aware that any arrangements had been made. You should ask the Headmaster. I’ll come with you.”

The feeling of panic increased. Owen was fine, he told himself. They just didn’t plan properly for evacuating families. They didn’t even see that as a possible need. Qui-Gon interrupted the Headmaster who speaking to a man in Auror’s robes. Good, Anakin thought. That meant they could get this sorted.

“Headmaster,” Qui-Gon began, “Were you aware of any arrangements to have Anakin’s family moved here? Apparently Aurors were to bring them here.”

Yoda looked at him strangely. Anakin felt something sinister in that look. It meant something had to be wrong. “No, no orders were made to have Aurors escort anyone to Hogwarts.”

The tall Auror next to him agreed. “No, I would have heard of it if Aurors were making moves that could be viewed as political.”

Real terror made it hard for Anakin to breathe all of a sudden. Then Obi-Wan was right beside him. “What is it?”

“The Aurors were never sent for Owen. And he’s not here.”

Obi-Wan put a hand on his shoulder. “But you firecalled him. He said they were at the house. Oh god—”

Qui-Gon addressed the Auror. “Can you have someone look into it? This is important. Anakin’s only family could be in jeopardy.” The Auror nodded and summoned a Patronus.

Anakin didn’t even hear what he said. Obi-Wan had his arms around him and was asking him to go somewhere. Dorm. Right, dorm.

Soon enough he was in Obi-Wan’s room. Obi-Wan was talking to him, asking him to stay calm. Anakin tried to listen. Someone knocked on the entrance. Obi-Wan got up and let Ahsoka and Padmé in. They all piled onto the bed.

“We’ll wait with you.” Ahsoka said, taking his hand.

“How did you know?” Anakin asked.

“I sent my Patronus.” Obi-Wan muttered against his hair. They all sat in silence for hours. Every now and then one of them would say something but for the most part they just took solace in the small room and in each other.

At around midnight a German Shepherd Patronus ran through the walls and into the room. In Qui-Gon’s voice it repeated. “Anakin and Obi-Wan, you need to come see me now. In my rooms.” Anakin nodded at it and it vanished.

“We’ll meet in the Room of Requirement afterwards, okay?” Padmé said. Anakin nodded again, not sure he could form words.
He walked with Obi-Wan’s arm around him. Some people were still milling about, but Obi-Wan said they were Order members catching up and trying to get a room for the night in the castle.

They entered Qui-Gon’s rooms and sat on the couch immediately. There was already hot chocolate on the table. Anakin knew then. He knew Qui-Gon only ever made tea. His mind flashed to the terrible crime procedural shows he and Owen used to watch. They always gave survivors hot chocolate in those.

Qui-Gon and Avara sat opposite of them. “There’s no easy way to tell you this, Anakin. Beru is dead. Whoever showed up at their house were not Aurors. They were Death Eaters. Her body was found by Muggle police near the house but outside of it.”

“And Owen?”

“We found him as well. It seems as though their intent was to kidnap him, but either he foiled their plan or they changed their minds. They petrified him and had apparated him to a place where they would take a portkey. But it’s believed he got free somehow during the apparition. There were signs of a struggle on the stone walls of Knockturne Alley, near where the portkey was. That’s where he was found. Cause of death was Avada Kedavra.”

Anakin’s face didn’t change. He couldn’t even process it. Owen, who had raised him as best as he could, who gave up nights out with his friends to take care of a baby. Who helped him learn about machines and electronics, watched crap television with him when he was in a bad mood but still needed company, who never cared if Anakin was gay or straight...He was supposed to get married this summer. Him and Beru both were. And now they were just gone. The silence in the room became unbearable. But Anakin couldn’t break it. It would mean moving on, and that prospect was so painful to consider.

He wretched onto the carpet. He hadn’t even felt the nausea. Or maybe he had and just blocked it out. Qui-Gon cleaned it with a quick flick of his wand.

“I want to go the funeral.” Anakin said, after long minutes.

“Of course, we’ll arrange it if at all possible.” Qui-Gon said.

Right. Safety. They would have to use a disguise, be safe, as the funeral could mean an attack. This time to get a victim they could barter with. Anakin thought he might be sick again. He’d been so focused on safety that he’d not done enough for his own family. He’d let them die.

A question was pushed into his mind. ‘Want to go to the Room of Requirement?’

He nodded. It seemed the only thing he was good for today.

They moved through the now-vacant corridors and into the Room of Requirement.

Ahsoka and Padmé were there, along with Barriss, Sola, Kanan, and Ezra.

Ahsoka had a questioning look on her face. “He’s gone,” Anakin said quietly. And then Ahsoka hugged him hard. He was pretty sure that everyone hugged him. There were mattresses on the floor again, as well as blankets, real beds, and a bathroom.

“I couldn’t save him. I failed him, after he raised me.” He wasn’t even sure whose shoulder he was leaning on.

“He loved you. It’s not your fault. It’s Palpatine’s.” Ahsoka said.
“I should have done more. I could have! I spent so much time coming up with plans and doing drills here, but for my own family? I didn’t have a single emergency plan.”

“They were supposed to be safe in their House. They were lured out.” Padmé said. “It’s not something you could have prepared for. Owen had never been a target before. You saved so many lives already. Be gentle with yourself.”

Anakin wanted to scream and cry in outrage. He wanted to shake the foundations of the castle with his grief. But what good would it do? He couldn’t agree with Padmé, not yet. He wasn’t sure how to come to terms with this. Or if he ever would. But he could feel grounded here. With Obi-Wan and his friends. Owen had been brave. Even though Anakin was careless, Owen had been brave enough to trip up the plans of Death Eaters, with no wand or magic. The thought crossed his mind that at least Owen wasn’t being tortured, but it made him feel even worse somehow. He didn’t want to have to think thoughts like ‘at least Avada Kedavra is quick’ or ‘at least he wasn’t tortured into insanity’. He wanted to just not think at all.

Padmé handed him something. Sleeping Draught. He smiled just a bit. He went into the bathroom and found a set of pajama pants and a t-shirt. The other had already changed out of their robes. Anakin sat on mattress near Ahsoka. He noticed she was wearing Rex’s Quidditch team shirt. Obi-Wan sat behind him, wrapping his arms around Anakin and propping his own back up against the wall with a pillow. Barriss sat next to Ahsoka.

“Both of us,” she said. “You and me. We lost people. But we have this, and we’re going to be okay. Got it?”

Anakin nodded. “Anything you need, Skyguy,” Ahsoka added. “We’re not just the light. We light the way for each other.”

Anakin smiled faintly and took a sip of the Sleeping Draught. His last thought was that anyone standing against them should be terrified right now.

Chapter End Notes

Whoo, emotional roller coaster. Gotta admit, this chapter was a bit cathartic for me as I lost someone a few months ago and wasn't sure how to grieve. Thank you so much for reading and as always, I live for comments.
It took Anakin a few days to pull himself through the immediate haze of loss. Neither he or Barriss were left alone by their friends. He slept in Obi-Wan’s room and half listened to reports from his friends on meetings they’d attended. Minister Dooku had demanded that everyone leave Hogwarts, and Headmaster Yoda refused. Everyone in the school and village of Hogsmeade was now considered hostile by the government. The school was packed with new faces. Aurors, parents, even just people who knew the Ministry would turn on them. Anyone not a student, teacher, or Auror was going to be moved to Hogsmeade soon.

Logically he knew he had to pull it together. They would have to use the crystal soon. The school hadn’t been attacked again but it was a matter of time. They were at war now and he couldn’t just mentally check out. But it hurt so much to know his only blood family in the world was gone. His anger at himself, at all the staff for not doing more for Owen and Beru, it felt like a force that could eat him alive. In the end there wasn’t even a formal funeral. Too many people here were busy trying to prepare for another assault. And Anakin would have to meet with Muggles, file paperwork, discuss what to do with their house and the...the ashes. He didn’t have it in him to do that. He felt like he was full of gunpowder and looking for an accelerant. He didn’t want to be full of all this anger and despair but he couldn’t get it out.

He looked at Barriss, her head against Sola’s shoulder in the Room of Requirement. He couldn’t imagine what he’d do if anyone else got hurt in this. He had to do something to get these consuming thoughts to stop. He’d never been happy with sitting still and he knew he’d be useless to protect the castle in this state. He felt a tentative ripple of affection in his mind. Obi-Wan. What the hell would he do without Obi-Wan? The calm in his mind was the only thing keeping Anakin from falling over some kind of precipice.

Obi-Wan and Padmé entered, having come back from another strategy meeting.

They looked exhausted but such was everyone’s state lately. The meeting had run late, and it was nearly midnight. Instead of sitting down though, Padmé looked around and addressed them. “Come on. We have to do this soon.”

“Already?” Barriss asked sleepily.

“Yes. The sooner the better.” Padmé nodded. “Kanan and the others will meet us there.”

Anakin was confused. “Where are we going?”

“You’ll see, love.” Obi-Wan said, coming over to help him stand. Anakin wasn’t in a mood to speak more than a few words at a time. He nodded and kept silent as their group crept through the castle. Everyone else was in their dorms as it was past curfew, but those who fought weren’t really held to the same rules. The left through a side entrance and went out past the long-abandoned shed by the greenhouses, out towards the edge of the Forbidden Forest. There was a small fire just inside the school wards, and he could sense Ahsoka there, along with Rex, Kanan, Palo, and Cody. As they approached he noticed two dark boxes on the ground.

Coming to stand with their other friends, Obi-Wan held his hand and Padmé put one of hers on his shoulder. “We know you weren’t really allowed a funeral. So we had Professor Jinn work some
unapproved spells on some Muggles and well, it isn’t right to not have that chance.”

“We figured we could bury them here,” Obi-Wan added. “I lost my parents and having a grave to visit helped. I mean we don’t have to, but they’d be safe here. Until later, when you could have time to make a decision.” Anakin looked at the boxes and slowly moved towards them. He peered into one tentatively, and the firelight showed it him it was as expected. ‘Owen Lars’ was engraved on one plain-looking urn. The other one undoubtedly was ‘Beru Whitesun’.

Anakin took a long moment to consider this. At first panic welled up in him because this would mean acknowledging that they were dead. But they were. And this could be a kind of midway point, like Obi-Wan said. Until he had more time to think about it. He knew Beru had some family left but not much, and this way, well, maybe he could do this. He stood and hugged Obi-Wan hard. Then he nodded. “Yeah. Okay, I can keep them safe here at least.” He conjured a shovel and Obi-Wan did the same. It wouldn’t take too long to dig a space big enough for both urns, but it seemed important that he do it manually. He and Obi-Wan dug in silence, the smell of freshly overturned earth mixing with the smell of the fire.

Some time later and after they’d undone their outer robes due to sweat, they each carefully set one of the urns into the temporary grave. The other were still there, waiting silently for a cue.

“I can say something if you want,” Obi-Wan said. The offer was tempting but Anakin knew that this was something he had to do.

“No, I should do it,” he said quietly. He turned so he was in between facing the grave and the fire. “Thank you,” he said in a louder voice, “for being my family. For taking me in when I was a year old even though you never had to and it wasn’t fair for anyone to ask that of you. For raising me when it was hard and we didn’t have money and especially when I was an angry kid who got on your last nerve. You always loved me, and you loved Obi-Wan too. I’ll try to make sure you stay together, with Beru. Beru was always there for us, too. She put up with Owen’s jokes and didn’t even blink when I walked out of the fireplace one day. She was a brilliant scientist and she deserved so much better.” Anakin sniffed and realized that tears were rolling down his cheeks. He hugged Obi-Wan tightly.

Finally it was time to fill the grave in. Everyone helped, using bare hands to do it. By two in the morning it was mostly done. Anakin used his wand to restore grass to the area and Obi-Wan murmured a spell which caused white lilies to grow over the small patch of earth.

“Want to go to bed, love?” Obi-Wan asked.

“No, I think I’m going to stay here tonight.” Anakin sniffed. He’d read about the custom somewhere. How keeping vigil the first night over a loved one’s grave was important to keep malevolent spirits away. It felt right somehow.

“Me too,” said Barriss. Anakin knew she was volunteering so no one would object but he appreciated it.

“Alright, be safe.” Obi-Wan kissed him gently.

“We will,” he said.

The fire was still there after everyone but he and Barriss had gone.

“I wish I could fix this. It’s so stupid, after everything we’ve gone through, for people to die so senselessly. They weren’t even fighting! They never hurt anyone!” Barriss nodded from her seat next
to him, the firelight catching the shadows under her eyes and merging them with her tattoos.

“My mother hurt people. A lot. But I never thought I’d be the one to kill her. I’m sorry they’re gone. But I’m not sorry that you have good memories of them. I think I’d do anything right now to have one good memory of the person who was supposed to love me most in the world.” She said softly.

Anakin hadn’t thought of that but it was true. Owen had been his family. He hadn’t been perfect but he’d always tried. So had Beru. Still, his anger at himself and everyone in the castle who treated Muggles like an afterthought burned. He was crying again, he realized. He hadn’t really cried for them yet. He’d been afraid of having to feel all of this so acutely and he could feel a dam breaking open. He wept until he couldn’t think straight. And when the grief passed he let his rage go. It rippled across the grounds, sending the small campfire blazing high into the sky and rattling the trees at their roots. He focused on every unjust part of their deaths and let it go. His anger at himself, his friends, the adults who he was supposed to be able to trust, the monsters who’d attacked his home and family on two fronts. And finally at Palpatine. A psychopath who should have been put down by someone who wasn’t still attending school years ago.

When he was done he felt empty inside as though all the rage and grief had carved out every space inside him. He was sitting on the ground still with Barriss who’d sat still through his whole magical explosion. She was looking at him calmly, without pity but with empathy. He took a deep, shaky breath. He wasn’t hollowed out. He had to remember that. His family was still here. Barriss was proof of that. They’d both lost so much. She’d had to give up being a part of her own family to be his, and he wouldn’t betray that sacrifice for anything. He might want to go scream at Yoda or Qui-Gon or do something stupid like go after Palpatine on his own, but that wasn’t an option. They were a team and a family and they’d handle this like they did everything. By sticking together.

He felt his own magical signature flare up with purpose again. He’d been sleepwalking under all his darkness but Owen had once told him that life was for the living. Forgetting that wasn’t an option. He had Barriss and Ahsoka and all his other friends and most importantly he had Obi-Wan. And they had a home to fight for even if it was up to them to do a better job than the people who ran it.

He felt Barriss’ signature and nudged it with his, smiling at his friend. She smiled back. Dawn was creeping over the grounds. Just dark grey clouds for right now but they would lighten into streaks of brilliant color before long.

He stood and stretched his limbs out. He needed to go back into the castle, get some sleep, and then they all needed to figure out the crystal before anyone else got hurt. Hogwarts was full of people ready to defend it right now, and many of them saw him as a leader. Almost everyone who was of age to stay and fight was doing so. Some like Riyo and Satine had left, but many more were soldiers now. Slytherin had taken some harder blows than other Houses in terms of losing people to the Death Eaters so he had to make sure his House stayed strong. Some younger students like Eevee were there too. Others had been forced to go home by scared parents. The best thing he could do would be to end this war quickly.

“Ready to fight?” Barriss asked him. He nodded and hugged her tightly.

“You were right. We’re going to be okay and we’re going to make sure that everyone else is okay too.” He said. They headed back to the castle together just as orange tendrils of light were sneaking into the horizon.

Anakin quickly made his way to Obi-Wan’s room and slid into bed next to him.

“Hey,” the older boys said sleepily, pulling his dark grey comforter up around Anakin.
“Hey. And thank you for everything. I feel better now. If it weren’t for you I might’ve done something really scary.” Obi-Wan nuzzled into his chest.

“I love you. I’d do anything for you.”

“I love you, too. Let’s get some sleep. We have a lot to do later.”

Anakin woke around three in the afternoon. Obi-Wan was awake but still wrapped around him. They laid together in the quiet of the Head Boy’s room until Anakin finally spoke in a voice raw from crying the night before. “We should get Ahsoka and Padmé and meet in the Room of Requirement. We need to know what that crystal does.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Alright. But first we need to talk to Qui-Gon. And get the damned thing from your trunk. Padmé and Ahsoka are helping to fortify Hogsmeade and get people settled there. We can meet them after dinner though.”

“Okay, that works. I guess we should check in with Qui-Gon.” Thinking back, he hadn’t seen the man since he’d thrown up on his floor after learning about Owen.

They took their time getting dressed, and Anakin sent his wolf Patronus to make sure it was a good time to come by. Conjuring his wolf made him feel better as well. The bright lupine creature was proof that he still had good in him and could still feel love. He’d let go of his conflicting feelings about Qui-Gon and the other staff. They hadn’t meant for Owen or Beru to be hurt. They were scared, too, and trying to protect a castle full of students. If it hadn’t been for Obi-Wan and their friends, he might not have ever realized that. If he’d let his grief turn into rage and distrust, he’d become a monster like Palpatine. He wouldn’t be able to feel love like that. It would just be possession and fear of loss.

But because Owen had loved him, and Barriss and Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon and all his other friends, he was stronger than Palpatine. It was time to prove that.

They trailed through the castle towards Qui-Gon’s rooms. A few students stopped them to ask about meetings and Obi-Wan assured them they’d have one soon. When they made it to the unicorn tapestry Qui-Gon opened the door immediately. The Transfigurations Professor seemed surprised that Anakin hugged him right away but he quickly returned it.

“Well, if he’s not holding a grudge then I certainly can’t,” Obi-Wan huffed and hugged his foster father.

“My boys,” Qui-Gon whispered, closing his eyes. “I’m so sorry I lied to you. I suppose the road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions. But I swear to do my best to be honest with you from now on about everything.” They stepped back and Anakin gave a nod, not trusting himself to speak for the moment.

“We know,” Obi-Wan said. “And thank you for helping. Owen and Beru have a resting place for now.”

They took their seat on the couch they usually sat on across from Qui-Gon’s plush chair. “How many students are left at Hogwarts?” Anakin asked.

“Most of the Sixth and Seventh Years. Only ten or so total left or defected. Many younger children’s parents insisted they go home though. Between years one through five, less than half the students are left.” It made sense, Anakin supposed, but he’d wished more people had trusted that Hogwarts was
safer for students.

“We need to brief everyone else here, Aurors and parents, on safety protocol,” Anakin said. “Same for Hogsmeade. They at least need an idea of what to do in the event of an attack.”

“Agreed,” Qui-Gon answered. “I believe Padmé and Ahsoka are working with Hogsmeade on just that, along with Auror Fett and some under his command.”

“Good. We’ll have a meeting of the Lumos Imperious tomorrow,” Obi-Wan added. “We can all catch up. It would be best if you, the Headmaster, and a few others from the Order of the Phoenix came as well. Here,” he grinned and tossed Qui-Gon a knut. “It’s charmed to vibrate when we’re about to hold a meeting.”

“So this is how you organized students,” Qui-Gon mused. “Padmé’s Charms work, I take it?”

“Yep. I’m sure she’ll be a Charms Mistress in her own right before too long.” Anakin commented.

“That she will. So, what is it you two are planning on doing?”

“We’re going to try and activate the crystal tonight and report on what it does tomorrow. It could be a great weapon for us. Anakin’s father certainly thought it was important.” Obi-Wan replied.

“Indeed. A week ago I might have demanded you leave it alone, or have myself there to help you, but I understand that this is your destiny. I’ve fought alongside both of you, and I don’t imagine it was a one-time event. But I’ll also always worry about you as any guardian worries over those they love. Please be as cautious as you can be for those of us who need you.”

“Thank you, Qui-Gon. We will be, I promise.” All three of them hugged again before making their way first to the Slytherin dorms for Anakin to get the crystal and then to dinner in the Great Hall.

Dinner itself was quiet. Anakin got a lot of stares since word about his family had gone around but he was used to stares and whispers. Padmé and Ahsoka came back from helping at Hogsmeade and he hugged them both fiercely. They were approached a few times through dinner but for the most part people were content with leaving them alone. Rex and Cody were handling the Lumos Imperious and spreading word about the meeting.

Anakin had only been eating mechanically the past few days so being able to taste his food was a vast improvement. He knew he’d spend years and possibly the rest of his life missing Owen, but he supposed that was how grief worked. For now it didn't control him.

After dinner the four of them wordlessly went to the Room of Requirement. They all sat in a mostly empty room near a fireplace. Anakin produced the crystal from the pockets of his robes, and it put it at the center of the circle they formed.

“Padmé and I have already touched it,” Anakin said. “Now I think just you two have to.” He nodded to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. Ahsoka nervously pushed her braids behind her shoulder. Obi-Wan reached his hand out and the crystal hummed pleasantly. A yellow streak bloomed within the solid structures. It practically begged to be finished. Ahsoka reached her hand out as well, watching in fascination as crimson swirled through it. She looked like she was about to ask what was next when everything went hazy. The very air shimmered and suddenly they weren’t in the Room of Requirement any longer. Or they were, but it wasn’t their Room of Requirement. There were other people here, and Anakin couldn’t speak. He could see vague outlines that he knew represented his friends, but they weren’t physically present. It was like being in a pensieve but different.
There was a fireplace still, but there were also four large chairs and rows of books around them. In one of the chairs was a tall man with long dark hair. A python was curled around his shoulders and dozing happily in the firelight. This was...it was Salazar Slytherin. It had to be, from the pictures Anakin had seen in books. Which made the tall black woman in a dark blue dress Rowena Ravenclaw. And the heavy set woman who exuded a calm kind of power in her curve-hugging robes was Helga Hufflepuff. And Godric Gryffindor... the man with the almond shaped eyes and close cropped hair who was toying with an enchanted knife of some kind.

The Founders of Hogwarts were all here. As if aware they had visitors they began speaking.

“What we’ve done up ’til now isn’t enough. The weapons, the chamber. It’s good but we need to know for sure that this place will stand withstand any threat. Not just Muggles but other Wizards. We’ve seen enough wars to know that Wizards aren’t above them,” Godric said.

“Yes, but how?” Rowena asked. “We’ve done all the warding we possibly could. We deciphered so many ancient texts.”

“Those texts may have hinted to an answer,” Salazar contemplated. “We can’t be here forever. We’ll eventually perish and new guardians will be required. The weapons we’ve forged are great. But they’re part of us, not the school herself. There’s so much magic in these walls that they’re practically sentient.”

“Are you suggesting what I think you’re suggesting? Because we will not resort to Dark Magic.” Godric said, leaning towards Salazar.

“Dark? Half of these tomes will be considered ‘dark’ in a few hundred years. We’re too susceptible to Muggle thinking. If some of us had our way we’d flagellate ourselves for having magic at all. We’re not ‘dark’, Godric. Please refrain from being so crass.”

“Only if you refrain from being overly dramatic,” Gryffindor rolled his eyes.

“Boys,” Helga said with affection. “If you could save it for your private chamber.” They both blushed horrendously. “Now, I believe you were saying that you may have found something, Salazar?”

“Yes, well. We’re all familiar with the concept of a Horcrux. And it is Dark, Godric. But that’s not what I’m proposing. A Horcrux requires one to split their soul through an act of violence. But that’s not the only way a soul can be split. Another way is love. When two magical beings bond, they split their magical presence to form the bond, if it is true at least. I hypothesize that the same can be done with highly magical places. We’ve spent years teaching students here, walking these hallways, standing on these towers. Students who come here bring a piece of themselves that never truly dissipates. Not as a ghost, as that would be an incomplete fulfillment. But as proud beings who wished to say thank you for the shelter provided here. We have asked our students to do as we have not yet done. We give part of ourselves to Hogwarts. She will keep us safe, and we will keep her safe.”

“How would this be achieved?” Rowena asked. “A Horcrux requires murder. What would this require?”

“Intent.” Helga said softly. “The very thing that makes magic is its intent. We’d have to induce a trance state and convince Hogwarts to bond with our signatures.”

“We’ve all performed warding rituals here with blood,” Rowena said. “It could work. Though it would be a sacrifice of kinds. We wouldn’t be ghosts, but a part of us would remain here for as long
as the castle did. We’d be kept in the walls themselves. We’d go dormant for long periods like that. But you planned on that.” She smiled at Salazar. “We’d keep enough of our essences here to be called upon in a time of great need, like sleeping dragons.”

Godric spoke again. “The ties between us and our weapons...they’re the strongest bonds we have currently. You mean to tie them as well? You’re talking about setting mechanisms for others in the future to call upon those items.”

“Yes. If they fulfill certain criteria, they should be considered our heirs. Gods know that most of us don’t have the time or inclination to reproduce naturally, and even if we did, we’d want to ensure that those who could call upon us would be worthy and not simply bear our names.”

“And what constitutes worth?” Helga asked with an arched brow.

“Whatever we deem so. I for one, would only consider a Parseltongue. That alone would ensure a certain kind of lineage that would protect them from the Muggles who would happily burn or drown us all.” Salazar said haughtily.

“If I give part of my soul, then I see the value in making sure that our successors are true protectors. I also would want a non-blood heir to prove themselves willing to protect their family and to protect in the name of Hogwarts,” Rowena mused.

“We each have our criteria,” Helga said. “The question is how do we make sure our heirs are truly chosen?”

“That part of ourselves will know.” Godric said. “Only when righteous anger and fear of a threat from outside the castle rises will heirs be chosen. Only when they make a conscious effort to fight within and for these walls will we wake and they be called.” He said it almost to himself, but he could feel the weight of the words becoming truth. “And if all of us wake, what then?”

“If a threat so great should ever rise,” Salazar said, “it would indeed be dark times. A final measure, then. All of our power through our heirlooms, but one greater to bind them all together, as the four of us have been bound in creating this school.”

“A final shield, and a weapon in its own right,” Helga added. “A way to find us in their time of need.”

“Yes,” Rowena confirmed. “A way for them to add their own souls to Hogwarts and build upon its power. No matter what the threat, an internal power would be the most suited.”

“Is it decided then, Godric?” Salazar asked. “Will we build a way for our ideological heirs to protect this place?”

Godric stared at the floor for long minutes. “We will,” he said with finality. “We will give ourselves to this place, and if we find those willing to make the same sacrifice in years to come, we will provide them a path to follow to make sure that Hogwarts endures.”

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The image faded out and Anakin was soon looking at his friends. “But what does it do?” he asked. “How do we access Hogwarts like that?”

“We meditate,” Padmé said. “We find the magical signature of the castle herself. And we break a piece of ourselves off, just like they did. That’s the only way. They said it themselves. That we’d have to be able to make that sacrifice.”
“A watch without end…” Anakin muttered.

“What was that?” Ahsoka asked.

“Just- when I asked Professor Kolar about the crystal, he told me a prophecy that didn’t make sense. But it included the phrase ‘a watch without end’. I think that’s what it was. That if we do that, a part of us will be with Hogwarts forever, just like the Founders.”

“Are we all willing to do that?” she asked.

Anakin wasn’t sure. It was...it was the largest sacrifice he’d ever have to make. Well, aside from bonding with Obi-Wan, but he hadn’t even consciously done that. It was just...right, so he’d done it and Obi-Wan had responded. “How can we do that if we’re already bonded to each other?” Obi-Wan voiced his concerns.

“With you two,” Padmé started. “Well, you two are already as close as two people can be, magically speaking. You’d have to coordinate I think. To give part of yourselves together. But I think it would still be possible.”

“I’ll do it.” Ahsoka said abruptly. “If it means ending this and that other Muggleborn kids don’t have to worry about their safety or their families, I’m in. No price is too high for that.”

“Me too,” Padmé said. “My sister and I call this place home. Palo and I hope that our children will too, someday. This is where we fought and laughed and learned about what makes us us.”

Anakin looked at Obi-Wan seriously. “I’m in if you are, love.” Obi-Wan said. “I don’t know if we’ll have children of our own, but whoever comes here should be safe. Whatever part of me is left over that isn’t with you- Well it can rest here.”

“We’re supposed to be together forever, right?” Anakin ventured a half smile. “I figure this will guarantee that we are. I’m in, too. For us, for Slytherin, for everyone in my House and this school who has sacrificed without expecting anything in return. Okay, yeah. We do it.”

“So we meditate and that’s it?” Ahsoka asked.

“I think the castle is tuned into the crystal.” Anakin said. “In all our research on crystals that’s the common denominator. Crystals focus energies. I think this one-It’s energy reads like it’s a map to Hogwarts. I didn’t understand that before. But if a portkey is linked to another place, a crystal is linked to a kind of energy. And we’ve woken this one up.”

“No more sleeping dragons after this,” Padmé murmured.

“Okay, now or never,” Anakin agreed. They all assumed meditation positions. Anakin found it particularly easy to clear his mind when it was just the four of them. He knew their signatures by heart. Of course he was linked to Obi-Wan but Padmé and Ahsoka were like sister signatures within the magic of Hogwarts.

He touched upon them all easily. Obi-Wan and his steady loyalty and unrelenting sense of justice that others confused for passivity. Ahsoka and her sharp bravery and willing to do anything for those she loved. Padmé’s keen intellect and desire to understand everything from all possible angles. And his own ambition which drove him not towards more power but towards family.

And then there was the crystal, pulsing with life and energy and how had they ever ignored it before? It was so loud and vibrant. He just had to reach through and...there!
He wasn’t his own body anymore. He was just his signature, his sense of Obi-Wan and family and home. The two of them as something greater than themselves. They let go together and let the Castle claim of them what it needed. All four of them were together now, rushing through the walls, seeing everything happening within the stone confines. They were the crypts speaking of valor and love and classrooms full of learning, the towers speaking of ancient loyalties and the lake singing of mysteries yet to be understood. The heart of the castle so near the kitchens which fed so many who needed it. Godric’s Daggers and Hufflepuff’s Shield, Suna sleeping happily under their feet having done her job, Rowena’s Spear imbued with the knowledge to crush those who would seek to bring the castle down.

Together they watched generations of students come and go. People of all backgrounds, not all of them human, enter and leave and call Hogwarts a sanctuary. All races and genders fit under what the school called ‘magic’. And all of them left their mark, be it as joyous specks or with serious intent to never part from the place. Hogwarts had seen wars and famine and great loss but she was always so much more than her losses. They had made the sacrifice, but they didn’t know that it was a two way relationship. As they gave a part of their power to the castle, they became more powerful in return.

Anakin stood suddenly. He felt his wand in his robes but it seemed like an afterthought now. The walnut and dragon heartstring were a conduit but he no longer needed a conduit while he was at Hogwarts. He was Hogwarts. He knew that Barriss and Sola were asleep and that Ahsoka’s mother was up late and worried in the newly opened room where she was sleeping. Kanan and Ezra were asleep in the Slytherin dorm, though Kanan was having nightmares about his time spent alone and on the run from Death Eaters.

He looked at his friends. “We’re...part of her.”

“We’re stronger,” Ahsoka said.

“But only here,” Padmé added. “Only when we’re here are we that strong.”

“And when we die, we’ll become part of this place.” Obi-Wan said. “That’s the bargain.”

“Part of us together forever... I can live with that.” Anakin smiled.

“Is anyone else really tired?” Ahsoka asked. “Because I really just want to find Rex and sleep for days.”

“I am too,” Padmé said. “And yeah...I can see all of you now so clearly. We’re all tired.”

“We’ll have to work at shielding,” Anakin confirmed. “If we’re this tuned in at all times to the entire castle we’ll go crazy.”

“Yeah, but she’s pretty incredible,” Obi-Wan said, letting his fingers drift against a stone wall.

“Okay, sleep now,” Anakin yawned. “We have a lot to do tomorrow.”

“And the crystal?” Ahsoka asked.

Anakin picked it up and looked empty. Just a transparent piece of blue and clear quartz now. “I’ll leave it here. It’s given us what we needed to defend the school. It’s up to the next round of Heirs to find it. Hogwarts will know what to do with it.”

Soon they’d left the Room of Requirement behind and gone off to their respective rooms. Anakin suspected that Padmé had somewhere secret with Palo, but he didn’t want to pry. Ahsoka and Rex would likely fall asleep together in front of their Common Room fire. And be it today or tomorrow...
they were ready for anything now. At any moment they could turn every brick in the school on an intruder and not even Palpatine could fight against that.

Chapter End Notes

So not much longer to go on this fic. Thank you to everyone who's read up til this point!
The hot summer days went by with many training sessions. Even some of the Aurors participated and were impressed at the variety and rigor with which the Hogwarts students trained. Auror Fett mentioned that his team would have to up their game after the war if they wanted to keep up with the Lumos Imperious.

Drills were also conducted in Hogsmeade. People worked together and found underground passages to use to get to the castle in case of an emergency. Aurors and students alike helped adults brush up on their dueling skills.

Hogwarts was a fortress now. Students walked its halls but outside of combat there wasn’t much academic learning taking place. The Ministry had tried to starve them out but the school’s powerful House Elves made sure that there was food for everyone. Dooku declared everyone in the school and village as enemy combatants who had kidnapped younger children, but enough anonymous editorials and Wireless interviews came out that that piece of propaganda was squashed.

Padmé was in charge of propaganda and messaging. She was brilliant at directing people with influence in how to wield it both subtly and overtly when needed. She and Anakin had put together a team of of former Ministry workers to speak out against Dooku and their efforts saw more people coming into Hogsmeade everyday.

Someone was always asking him questions about battle strategies, safety plans, what he thought the Dark Lord would do next. It was a bit overwhelming. But he answered as best he could and worked with the Aurors and staff to give them the best chance possible. Some of the Aurors had jokingly started calling him, Obi-Wan, Padmé, and Ahsoka ‘General’. But it had caught on and now Sixth and Seventh Years were calling them that in seriousness.

He was currently in Hogsmeade with Ahsoka and Obi-Wan, showing a group of adults how to position themselves in the event of an attack with multiple assailants. Anakin was explaining that they wanted to spread out but not so they blinded themselves to what was going on. Taking cover wasn’t necessary unless you were in serious peril. He used a levitation spell to get on the roof of Rosmerta’s while Ahsoka held a position from within the doorway.

“But Generals,” a man who Anakin thought was Kat’s father said. “Wouldn’t being on the roof make you a target?”

“Every situation is different. But for this one,” he pointed to the dummies they’d conjured to represent Death Eaters, “they’d be focused on killing the most immediate threat on the ground. That’s why you have to be willing to cover each other’s backs. Get up, cast your curse, and keep going from there.” The man nodded.

“Alright, back to practicing deflection and incapacitating curses,” Obi-Wan said. “Ahsoka will keep practicing use of terrain with you after dinner.”

Regrouping Anakin turned to his friends. “Do you think it gets easier? Being in command and having people call you General?”

“I don’t know,” Ahsoka said. “But I kinda like it.” Anakin laughed at that. She would.
“It’s not the worst thing ever, but I am rethinking my decision to be an Auror.” Obi-Wan said. “I may have had my fill of combat drills and fights with Dark wizards.”

Later that night, after dinner, Anakin and Obi-Wan lay awake in their bed. “It’s going to happen soon,” Anakin said. “No one in the Order of the Phoenix has any good intel and there’s no way Dooku will just let us spend the summer like this. It would be a show of weakness.”

“He has been too quiet lately,” Obi-Wan agreed, hugging Anakin closer. Knowing that the fight of their lives was ahead of them was a heavy thing.

“You think about what we’ll do if we win?” Anakin asked.

“Yeah. All the time. I want to go somewhere away from here for awhile. Not forever, but just us, I want us to have a proper vacation. No media hounding us for war stories, no one to train. Maybe just a cabin or something for us to relax.”

“Just relax, huh?” Anakin grinned.

“Relax, drink some firewhisky, spend an inordinate amount of time naked.” Obi-Wan grinned. “What about you? You still have another year of school.”

“Maybe.” Anakin said. “After this I might just...declare myself graduated. Besides, I don’t want to spend a whole school year only getting to see you sometimes. After everything we’ve been through I know what’s important to me. And you’re at the top of that list.”

“Well, we are both bound to the school so I couldn’t stay away for very long even if I wanted to. Which I don’t.” He kissed Anakin for emphasis. Then he took a deep breath. “If I don’t survive-”

“No. You don’t get to talk like that.” Anakin said bluntly.

“Love, we’ve been so lucky that we haven’t had more casualties. And when the Dark Lord attacks he’ll use everything he has. Death Eaters, Dementors, werewolves. People will die. We can’t fool ourselves into thinking that the only deaths will be those of our enemies. And if anything happens to me, I want you to know that I went to Gringotts, not long after Owen and Beru...I’m of age and the last of my line. In the event of my death everything will passed to you. The papers are in my vault.”

Anakin felt like there were rocks in his stomach.

“I-I didn’t even think of that. I don’t have any family left, either. Should I go and-”

“No, you don’t have to do that. I just wanted to be sure it went to you. As an Heir of Hogwarts, the default is for anything in our names to go to the school.”

“Do you think you’ll die? Is that why you’re telling me this?”

“Of course not! I just wanted you to know that you’re my family. I will do everything I can to end this war and spend the rest of our lives together.”

“I hate this. I hate having to think in these terms.”

“Me too. But I did need to tell you.”

Anakin sat up abruptly. “Let’s get married.”

“Well we had talked about that after the war.” His partner smiled.
“No, I mean now. Before we have to fight for our lives.”

“Anakin, I don’t want to marry you because we might not survive.” Obi-Wan said with a frown.

“I don’t want that either. I want us to get married because we’re going to survive, and after this stupid battle we’re going to go on a honeymoon where no one can reach us for weeks. We already share a permanent magical bond. And I don’t mean that in a ‘well we may as well’ kind of way. I mean we’re already connected and I want to make it official to everyone else. That we’re going to fight and love and survive together.”

“You really want to marry me for a future and not because you’re scared of an ending?” Obi-Wan trusted Anakin but he had to be sure.

“Yes. Us, maybe kids someday, you working in our garden and me blowing things up in a shed, bickering over how to set the Hogwarts curriculum and politics and babysitting for Padmé and Palo and Ahsoka and Rex. Traveling and helping to rebuild the magical world. I want that with you.”

Obi-Wan kissed him soundly. When they broke apart they both had tears in their eyes. “Then yes. Let’s get married.”

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After a lengthy and private celebration, they got to wondering about the specifics. “Yoda could officiate.” Obi-Wan suggested. “He’s got Ministry clearance for that. Not that the current Ministry would process our paperwork, but still.”

“To hell with the Ministry,” Anakin said. “I just want Qui-Gon, Avara, and our best friends there.”

“We don’t have rings,” Obi-Wan pointed out.

Anakin grinned. “I think I know someone who can help us with that. Winky!” Winky appeared with a quick ‘pop’. 

“Is Masters Kenobi and Skywalker needing anything?“ The House Elf asked.

“We have a very special errand to ask of you, Winky. There’s a jeweler in Hogsmeade. You know the one, right?”

“Oh yes, Winky knows everything about Hogsmeade.

“Excellent. Tomorrow morning could you pop over there and ask the owner, Ms. Maura, for two plain rings? Just silver is fine, with sizing charms on them. Here’s a few galleons to cover it.” Anakin handed the House Elf the money. “Just bring them straight to me, when you can. We’d really appreciate it. If there’s any change please keep it.” Winky looked delighted at that and assured them he’d have the rings bright and early the next day.

“We should ask the Headmaster,” Obi-Wan said, grinning ear to ear. Headmaster Yoda hardly ever slept so odds were that he’d be awake. When they approached his office they were granted entry.

“What brings the two of you here so late?” The elderly wizard asked from behind his desk.

“We were wondering if we could have a bit of your time tomorrow evening.” Obi-Wan said. “We know the Ministry isn’t going to process it or anything, but well, we’d like it very much if you could officiate a wedding ceremony for us.” The Headmaster put his quill down and looked at them very carefully.
“You wish to be married?”

“We know we’re young, but well, Wizards do get married earlier than Muggles.” Anakin said. “And we know what our bond means.”

“This isn’t a rash act out of fear.” Obi-Wan said. “We’re doing it because we have hope for the future.” The old Wizard stood and moved out from behind his desk.

“Love is the greatest light of all when darkness comes. I would be extremely honored to preside over your ceremony.” Then he smiled a bright smile and hugged each of them. “I have many meetings tomorrow. But just before dinner at seven pm I have time.”

“That’s perfect, Headmaster. Thank you so much.” Obi-Wan said.

Heading back to Obi-Wan’s room they ran into Ahsoka and Rex. They’d come from Hogsmeade, running dueling drills with an entire town of people and they looked exhausted.

“What are you two grinning about?” Ahsoka asked, raising an eyebrow.

They looked to each other and then back at their friends. “Ahsoka, are you both free tomorrow around seven? Just before dinner?” Anakin asked.

“Um, yeah. Why?” She flipped her braids behind her shoulder.

“This is sudden, we know. But you were the first friend I ever had here and you’ll always be one of my best friends. Obi-Wan and I are getting married. Tomorrow. Will you be my person of honor?”

Anakin had the pleasure of watching both Ahsoka and Rex drop their jaws at the same time. Then Ahsoka squealed and lunged at him, enveloping him in a tight hug.

“Of course I will! Oh my god, you two are perfect. Do I need to wear anything or do anything? Ooh, do I need to make a speech?” Anakin knew she was thinking a mile a minute.

“No, it’s going to be a small, quiet ceremony. I just want you standing up there with me and signing as a witness.”

“And Rex,” Obi-Wan said. “If you’d be one of our groomsmen, we’d be very honored.”

“I’ve fought side by side with both of you more times than I can count. Of course I’ll be a groomsmen.” He smiled and clapped them both on the back, then Ahsoka hugged Obi-Wan as well.

“We’re not sure where in the castle it’ll be yet, but Yoda said he’d officiate. We’ll let you know when we know.” Anakin smiled. After more happy squealing noises Ahsoka and Rex left.

“You know we have to tell Padmé now.” Obi-Wan said. Otherwise she’ll kill us for being the last to know.”

“You’re right. Padmé, then Qui-Gon. Then we go to bed and sort the rest tomorrow.” Anakin agreed.

Without even having to think about it he knew Padmé was in the library with Palo. Their mental barriers were actually fairly easy to put up unless they wanted to lower them to let the castle in. Long hours of meditation and Occlumency training were likely to thank for that. It was after hours for the library but well, ‘Generals’ had certain privileges.

They found their friends and joined them at the table.
“What are you two doing at this hour? You’re not on training shifts for a couple of days.”

“Nice to see you both as well.” Anakin smiled.

“We actually wanted to ask both of you a favor. Nothing big.” Obi-Wan said evenly. “At seven tomorrow evening there’s going to be a small ceremony in the castle. The location is to be determined. But we were hoping you could both come.”

“What kind of ceremony? Is this a warding thing or another ‘you’re all Heirs’ thing?” Palo asked.

“Neither,” Obi-Wan said, not able to contain his smile anymore. “It’s of a personal nature.”

“Oh my god!!” Padmé yelled. Thankfully the librarian was off duty. “You’re getting married!!”

“We are,” Anakin said, flashing a huge smile. “And we want you there.”

“Padmé, you took me in under your wing when I was a first year. I’d be honored if you’d be my person of honor and sign our marriage certificate as a witness.” Obi-Wan said. “And of course we’d love it if Palo was a groomsman.”

“My boys!” Padmé said, standing to hug them both. “Of course we will!!”

“Thank you,” Obi-Wan said. “And you don’t have to do anything. No frills or any of that. Yoda’s officiating and we’ll let you know where it’s being held tomorrow by mid day. It’ll just be a quick ceremony.”

“I love you both so much. I can’t wait.” Padmé said, hugging them again.

They only had one more stop to make. It was probably for the best that they didn’t hear Padmé turn to Palo and say “Quick ceremony my ass. We’re going to talk to Yoda.” Palo smiled and followed the woman he loved.

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“Obi-Wan, Anakin. Is everything alright?” It was nearly one in the morning now but no one except younger students were sleeping.

“It is, can we talk with you and Avara for a bit?”

“Of course, come in.” Qui-Gon poured tea for all of them and they took their usual seats as Avara came in from the back bedroom.

“Are you both free at seven tomorrow?” Anakin asked.

“We have duties in Hogsmeade during the day, but we should be back well before then, yes.” Avara said.

“Good,” Obi-Wan stated. This was the only person he was nervous about telling. The man who’d raised him and cared for him like a son. “We um, we’d like it if you could join us. Not for any kind of Order business. But just...close friends getting together. Anakin-Anakin asked me to marry him and I said yes.”

Both Professors looked floored. Though to her credit, Avara recovered first. “I figured you two would tie the knot, but why now? You’re so young.”

“We know,” Anakin said. “But we talked about it and we’re not doing it because we’re afraid of
dying in battle. We already know we’re linked forever. We’re doing it because we have hope that we’ll both live and win this war. And because well, if something did happen, and I’m not thinking it will, but I want the world to know that I was Obi-Wan’s husband. We went through a lot, being forced to hide who we were and all the anti-gay propaganda.”

“He’s right,” Obi-Wan said. “We’ve talked about it for some time. And we want that, to know that we’ve chosen each other not just because of a bond we forged as children or because we’re Heirs. I know that any scenario in my life is better with Anakin in it than without him. War, peace, dueling, doing dishes, helping to rebuild our world. This is what we want.”

“Well there’s no arguing with that,” Qui-Gon grinned. “Of course we’ll come. This calls for a celebration.” He went to his liquor cabinet and pulled out his favorite scotch.

“You two have been a beacon of hope for Hogwarts and the magical world for a long time,” Avara said. “I know that together, you’ll do even more good and bring more peace than you would alone.” Anakin had hugged more people today than he ever had, and it was wonderful.

They sipped scotch with Qui-Gon and Avara for almost an hour. They talked about summers spent in his backyard, about how he and Avara hoped to marry after the war. When they stood to leave Qui-Gon clasped Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “The greatest privilege of my life has been raising you. Both of you are my family and I could not ask for a better one in this life or any other.” Anakin also hadn’t teared up so many times in a day, he realized.

An idea struck him then.

“You’ve both seen us through battles and schemes. I don’t know how Wizarding weddings work but...would you both walk us down the aisle? I mean it’s nothing big, just a few groomspeople and Ahsoka and Padmé are our women of honor, but you’ve helped us and guided us.” All four of them were hugging then.

When they left, Obi-Wan said he thought it was incredibly thoughtful to include Qui-Gon and Avara, even if it wasn’t a Wizarding tradition. Anakin added that they’d never been traditional. They’d just always been them. He was saddened that Owen wouldn’t get to see this. Owen had always rooted for him and Obi-Wan as a couple in his own quiet way of giving acceptance. Before the ceremony he’d visit the grave. It was the least he could do.

The next day both Obi-Wan and Anakin were awakened at nine in the morning by a very cheerful House Elf.

“Winky has the rings, sirs! Ms. Maura asked what they were for, and Winky said he thought that Masters Kenobi and Skywalker were getting married. So Ms. Maura insisted on giving the best rings she had!” An image of a gaudy diamond-filled affair flooded Anakin’s mind and he had to force himself to not wince at the idea.

“Can we see them?” He asked the House Elf. Anakin was shirtless but he figured House Elves didn’t hold the same notions about modesty.

“The Elf dropped two rings into Anakin’s hand. They actually weren’t gaudy or terrible. In fact they were kind of perfect. Obi-Wan put his head over Anakin’s shoulder to see. They were both simple silver colored bands with flecks of dark scattered throughout.

“Ms. Maura said they’re a mix of white gold, silver, and onyx! Impervious to curses and made by an
“Thank you, Winky.” Obi-Wan said. “You’ve done excellent work. Would you like to come to the ceremony?” Winky looked like he might cry with joy. “It’s at seven tonight. We’re not sure where yet but we’ll let you know. If you want to, that is.”

“Winky has never had such an honor!” He was crying now. “He will tell everyone of how great Masters Kenobi and Skywalker are!”

“No, that’s quite alright! We only want close friends coming.” Winky started crying again and left with another ‘pop’.

“Now we have to get coffee and tell the rest of our friends before Winky does,” Anakin grumbled.

“You really think Padmé hasn’t beaten us to it?” Obi-Wan asked, stretching and looking for his shirt.

“Shit.” Was Anakin’s response.

In the Great Hall Anakin and Obi-Wan took their usual seats, the rings securely tucked away in Obi-Wan’s pockets.

“How could you not tell us?” Barriss hissed.

“It just happened!” Anakin said defensively. “We were up half the night just getting an officiant and the basics together.”

“Fine. But Sola and I are groomsgirls.”

“Of course you are,” Anakin said. “We were planning on asking you first thing.” Anakin needed more coffee for this.

“Yes!” Sola said.

“What’s going on?” Ezra asked, sitting down next to Obi-Wan and yawning.

“We’re getting married.” Obi-Wan said bluntly. “Tonight at seven. Small ceremony, location to be determined. Can you and Kanan come?”

Ezra suddenly looked very awake. “That’s fantastic!”

“Shh!” Anakin said. “We’re trying to keep this low key.”

“Can Eevee be the flower girl?” He asked quietly. “She’d love that.”

A shared look and Obi-Wan and Anakin agreed. Anakin was considering cancelling tonight’s training so they could use the Room of Requirement for the ceremony. And holy shit. He was getting married today.

Padmé came by, having already eaten breakfast. “I have your location secured,” she said. “Just show up where I tell you to.” And immediately she walked off. Anakin wasn’t sure if he should be worried or not.
The day wore on and no one approached him about a secret ceremony, so he took that as a good sign. He moved the evening training session to midday so that they’d have the Room if they needed it. He told everyone that they could use a nice summer evening off and to make the most of it.

He visited Owen and Beru and sat for awhile beside the white lilies, telling them that he was getting married and how much he wished they could be there to see it and he knew that wherever they were they were still together.

He talked to Kanan and Barriss about knowing the fight was soon. And about how lucky they all were to have love, familial and romantic, at Hogwarts. Then he spent some time alone on the astronomy tower, writing his brief vows. They’d agreed to each write their own and he had butterflies in his stomach about what he’d say to Obi-Wan. By the time he was done it was nearly five o’clock.

He spent the remaining hours in his dorm, finding a pair of robes that weren’t school issue and weren’t dress robes, either. After a few alterations he had a set that was black with dark green accents and gold cuffs. He figured it would have to do. Rex had assured him that Wizard weddings weren’t so different from Muggle ones, as they had similar roots. Yoda would ask them their intents, and then Obi-Wan would say his vows, and Anakin would follow. They’d hold each other’s wands a sign of trust and respect, then the rings would be exchanged. Yoda would say some traditional words and they’d kiss. Then they and their witnesses would sign the papers and they’d be married. They planned to unleash their Patroni at the end, as a sign of commitment. Anakin had been a bit surprised when Obi-Wan revealed that his badger was now a raven, but he figured it was a good sign.

Six o’clock. Anakin paced in the Common Room and nearly jumped when Barriss and Ahsoka entered.

“Everyone who’s attending, including Winky, has been informed of the location.” Barriss said.

“And we’re here to keep you calm until we escort you to the venue.” Ahsoka grinned.

They looked lovely. Barriss was wearing a dark blue robe with gold accents and Ahsoka was in crimson with silver cuffs and collar, her braids piled on top of her head in a beautiful display.

“I shouldn’t be nervous but I am,” Anakin confessed.

“That’s normal, Skyguy. Your future husband is nervous, too. But you both look great and this will be a fantastic wedding,” Anakin nodded but continued pacing. This was really happening. He was marrying Obi-Wan. It was at once overwhelming and the most natural thing in the world.

Ahsoka took some photos of all of them, and they discussed how years later, they’d look back on this as a bright spot in a terrible war, and they’d all tell their kids about how Anakin and Obi-Wan always knew they were meant to be together.

It was now ten minutes til seven. “Okay, time to go.” Ahsoka and Barriss smiled at him. He took a deep breath and nodded. After leaving the Slytherin Common Room, he walked between them and they each took one of his arms.

They walked through the castle which was eerily silent. When Anakin realized they weren’t going for the landing that would take them to the Room of Requirement, he was confused.

“Where are we-”

“Hush, Skyguy. We got this taken care of.” Ahsoka smiled warmly and Anakin didn’t miss the spark
of mischief in her eye.

They were headed to the Great Hall. Why were they headed for the Great Hall? As they turned the
corner into the huge room, Anakin saw why. The tables had been pushed aside and there was a
walkway in the center of the room. Instead of the staff table there was only Yoda behind his podium,
a small platform in front of him. There were peonies everywhere, in every shade, as were fairy lights
with real fairies, and the ceiling reflected the late evening sun. Students of all ages were sitting at the
tables and no one was organized by House. It was just on school, coming together. Professors sat
with students and even some parents and Aurors were in attendance. Anakin was sure he had a
stupid expression on his face. Across from him at the opposite entrance to the Hall, Obi-Wan was
standing with Qui-Gon and Avara, smiling shyly. He was wearing black robes with pale yellow
cuffs and a gold hem.

Ahsoka and Barriss escorted him to Obi-Wan’s side and then they made their own way up the aisle
as music played. Anakin realized that the wedding party was almost complete. Ahsoka, Padmé,
Barriss, Sola, Rex, Cody, Kanan, and Ezra were all waiting under an arch made of dark wood and
laced with gold and emerald silk ropes.

Anakin looked to Obi-Wan. “Padmé suggested a lot of it, but I thought it fit. I um, I hope you like
it?” Obi-Wan said.

Anakin smiled and fought the tears in his eyes. “I love it.” He’d planned on a simple bare bones
ceremony but this was oddly perfect. He reached for Obi-Wan’s hand as Avara came up beside him
and Qui-Gon took his place beside Obi-Wan. Together they walked towards Headmaster Yoda.

When they reached their place under the arch, the Headmaster began.

“War and darkness have often made good people see the worst in each other. But today we have two
young people who have seen the darkness, and chosen to find light in each other. Obi-Wan Kenobi
and Anakin Skywalker have fought together, have brought Hogwarts together as a school and a
home for many. They have sacrificed much and they have inspired many of us who had forgotten
what love and companionship truly mean. Today they join together as one family. One entity,
blessed by magic, to never be parted. If you would exchange wands.”

They did so and Anakin thought that Obi-Wan’s wand felt just as natural in his hand as his own.

“Obi-Wan,” Yoda said. “If you would begin with your vows.”

Obi-Wan shifted his weight and looked at Anakin.

“I, Obi-Wan Kenobi, last of my name, have never known friendship, happiness, or love as I have
known it with you. Since we’ve met you’ve had my loyalty as a friend, and since I fell in love with
you, and probably before that, you had every other part of me. You’ve shown me what it is to be
brave, to be kind, and to be family. You’re relentless and stubborn and I love that about you because
you’ve never given up on anyone, not really. I can’t think of anything as great in this world as being
by your side. I swear to protect you, to respect your wishes, and to appreciate you, especially when
things are hard. And I swear to love you with everything I am and every way I can. I pledge myself
and my love to you, Anakin Skywalker.”

Yoda looked at Anakin expectantly and Anakin had to recenter himself in the wake of the emotions
of joy and love he was feeling.

“I, Anakin Skywalker, last of my name, have never known an existence where I didn’t love you.
Even as a child I sought love and validation from you in ways that I would never think to seek from
You have been a constant in my life and I am grateful beyond words for that. Your calm, your steady sense of justice, and your unwavering support have made me into the person I am today. When others feared or doubted me, when I feared and doubted me, you always knew and trusted. You taught me that real love is patient and respectful. That it doesn’t set arbitrary limits or demands and that it always, always listens. I swear to love and protect you to the best of my ability for the rest of my life. I swear to put us first and to always treat you as an equal and stand by your side as you stand by mine. I pledge myself and my love to you, Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

“The rings, if you please,” Yoda said, smiling from his podium. Eevee brought the rings on a pillow embroidered with the Hogwarts crest. Hands only shaking slightly, Anakin placed the ring on Obi-Wan’s finger and Obi-Wan returned the gesture.

“Please kiss the grooms,” Yoda said.

They kissed, and a huge roar of applause erupted. All of Hogwarts seemed to be cheering for them. Anakin even caught Professor Windu wiping his eyes. He could feel how happy their friends were for them and how Hogwarts herself seemed to smile upon the ceremony. Then, using each other’s wands, they summoned their Patroni. An effervescent wolf and raven ran down the aisle and circled the room. Anakin kissed his husband again. It was absolutely one of the best days of his life. And the even better part was they had a lifetime for more days.

Chapter End Notes

Yay, something super sweet in the middle of war. Coming in to the last leg of this story. Thank you very much to everyone who's read. And yes I will spend an entire day in the near future fixing typos and inconsistencies. Just not sure when yet. Feedback always very much appreciated! (Also some of the vows and ceremony structure were based on my wedding. ‘Cause I'm a sap like that.)
Anakin Skywalker and the Last Stand at Hogwarts

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Anakin and Obi-Wan didn’t stay long after the ceremony. They stood for some pictures, accepted congratulations from people, but honestly they just wanted time to themselves. They made their excuses as the party continued and headed back to Obi-Wan’s room. Except when they entered the room was very different. Instead of the small room with a twin bed, it was now a much larger room, with a living room and fireplace, and a bedroom with a full queen sized bed. The bathroom was also expanded to have a huge tub. Both their trunks were there as well as Artoo and Threepio.

A note on the bed read: A married couple needs a bit more space than a Head Boy. Congratulations and much love, Depa Billaba and Qui-Gon Jinn.

Anakin and Obi-Wan grinned at each other and made short work of removing each other’s robes. Anakin figured the universe owed them at least this one night. They moved together seamlessly, falling onto the bed and taking all the time they wanted. Obi-Wan delighted in leaving marks and tugging gently on Anakin’s long hair.

Anakin bucked his hips when long, lube-coated fingers ran against the cleft of his ass and down to his entrance. They both moaned when Anakin took them both in one large hand and squeezed gently, moving up and down their shafts. When Obi-Wan had Anakin half out of his mind with lust, stretched out and begging, he slid in, loving how his husband’s legs wrapped around his back, trying to get more. And gods, his husband.

They spent all night pressing their magical signatures together, using lips, tongues, teeth, and fingers to explore every part of each other. Anakin loved teasing the most intimate parts of his lover with his tongue and Obi-Wan happily submitted. The sheets were wrecked and they were both sore and content when dawn neared. They curled into each other, wearing only their rings and in Anakin’s case the wolf’s tooth necklace he never took off. It was peace and family and love and they both felt renewed by an inner light as the sun came up.

The wedding seemed to have boosted many people’s spirits at Hogwarts. Qui-Gon told them it was a sign of hope and love in during a dark time, and everyone seemed to want to congratulate them.

However trainings still had to go on and they spent many days fortifying Hogsmeade, running drills and dueling sessions. Before long mid-July was there and everyone was on edge, waiting for the worst to happen. Some of the younger students had organized subject specific study groups to keep them occupied and so they wouldn’t fall behind. Every now and then more people trickled into the village, their homes having been destroyed by Death Eaters. People were getting restless, waiting for the attack to happen. Intel was hard to come by as their only double agent had been found out and killed. There were people who didn’t want to wait but wanted to find out where the Dark Lord was and make the first strike. Anakin and Padmé agreed that such a strike would be suicidal. The most obvious target was the Ministry and it would be highly fortified. Obi-Wan and Ahsoka talked to the students and families who had loved ones wrongfully imprisoned in Azkaban and so wanted to attack first and convinced them that that would be what the Dark Lord wanted.

Still, it was hard to wait. However, a week before Anakin’s birthday the waiting was abruptly over. He was out in the greenhouse with Obi-Wan and Professor Billaba, collecting plants to use in
restorative and healing potions when Anakin stepped out of the greenhouse to place aconite leaves in a collecting bin.

He saw them. A group of black-robed and masked people walking up towards the castle. They weren’t at the wards yet but they soon would be. Anakin didn’t even think, he just cast the spell to set off the alarm and was thankfully that they’d modified it to alert Hogsmeade as well.

Obi-Wan and Professor Billaba came running out behind him. The Death Eater started in on attacking the wards and the three of them wordlessly ran towards the castle, knowing the wards would hold for awhile at least. Anakin and his friends had used their own blood to ensure it. As they ran Anakin summoned the Angfinitus and noticed that Obi-Wan was already holding his shield.

When students in the hall saw the Obi-Wan’s shield the ones who thought it might be a drill changed their minds. A Sixth or Seventh year from each House had been assigned to make sure that all younger years of their House made it into the Chamber so that Anakin, Obi-Wan, Padmé, and Ahsoka could focus on defense. Anakin of course had to open the Chamber but afterwards he rejoined those in the Great Hall.

Padmé sent her Patronus to an Auror in Hogsmeade to assess the situation. Her eagle came back to report that about thirty Death Eaters were working on the wards, but many were already using the tunnels to get to safety and those who would be fighting were taking positions. Plo Koon, Professor Kolar, and Professor Gallia were already at Hogsmeade. Madame Che had a handful of students and volunteers in the Healer’s wing to help triage and treat the wounded. They were as ready as they could be.

No longer needing wands inside the castle, Padmé held her spear, Ahsoka her blades, and Obi-Wan his shield. Anakin used his medallion to wake Suna, who he could feel was on her way. He asked her to make sure the Chamber was sealed shut. He dropped his mental shield against the castle and let himself merge with her, the other Heirs doing the same. He knew Rex and Cody were getting their House mates into the chamber, that Kanan and Ezra were scouting from towers for signs of Dementors, and that Barriss and Sola were on their way to the Great Hall with other students.

He could feel the wards under assault. They were holding but they wouldn’t hold forever against the Dark magic being hurled at them. There were so many Death Eaters. At least one hundred coming for the castle. Beyond them he felt a familiar void of anger and unhinged greed. Palpatine. The coward was waiting for his troops to take the advantage before he showed himself.

Another hit against the wards. They must have powerful curse breakers and ward specialists among their ranks.

“This is it,” Ahsoka said grimly.

“It is.” Anakin said. “We end this today.”

Rex and Cody joined them, confirming that everyone underage was in the Chamber, Barriss and Sola reporting the same.

Soon Yoda and Qui-Gon were with them. Yoda lifted one small hand and the main entrance to the castle shut. “It won’t take them much longer to break through.” The Headmaster said. “No matter what happens, Hogwarts must stand. And she could have no better protectors than you four.”

“Than us,” Obi-Wan corrected, gesturing to everyone in the Hall. “We’ve all fought and trained for this. We’ll all defend her together.”
The Headmaster nodded. “I must make last minute preparations. It has been an honor to teach and learn from all of you.” He bowed and headed off towards his office.

Anakin took the opportunity to kiss Obi-Wan and press their foreheads together. They were minutes away from a fight that would end lives on both sides. More people entered the Great Hall, wands at the ready and Anakin cold feel others taking their places around the castle.

The outer wards were breached and they could feel enemies on the grounds. The door would soon be blasted away. Anakin silently told Suna to wait in the hall until he gave the go ahead.

Dust fell from the door as Death Eaters assaulted it. From above the castle he felt Dementors circling. Everyone took their places to the sides of the door. Eventually it was destroyed and Death Eaters flooded in. Anakin began casting, picking off targets from the first wave. Then he signaled Suna. The great basilisk came winding in, chomping at whatever mask-wearing Death Eater she could. Within seconds it was chaos.

Anakin cast spell after spell, destroying petrified bodies as fast as he could. He felt Death Eaters on the higher levels of the castle and wordlessly Padmé, Barriss, and Sola chased after them. Rex and Cody were doing well, fighting back to back and keeping shields up at all times. Anakin felt a Crucio headed for him and with no words or wand, put his hand out and dissipated it. The Death Eater who sent it looked stunned, so Anakin used the opportunity to cast Sectumsempra on them. He felt a handful of Death Eaters headed for the Chamber and sent Suna after them. They must have learned where they kept underage students from Dyas and no one was hurting children on his watch. He felt the Dementors get closer, trying to enter the castle.

Obi-Wan looked at him and nodded, heading upstairs as fast as possible to take care of them. Anakin and Ahsoka held the Great Hall, stemming the tide of incoming Death Eaters as best as they could. Daara, Lux, and Tyzen along with Rex and Cody helped. Anakin could feel Suna kill the Death Eaters who had been headed for the Chamber and asked her to stay and guard it. They younger students had to be protected at all costs.

Ahsoka rolled and dodged a curse, slicing a Death Eater with one of her daggers. Lux finished him off with an asphyxiation curse. Mace Windu entered the Hall and raised his wand towards the ceiling. He uttered a short spell and suddenly the castle was alive. Anakin would have appreciated feeling the gargoyles and suits of armor come to life if he wasn’t so preoccupied. He could sense the hallways flooding with Death Eaters at all levels and knew it was time. He and Ahsoka both touched the walls closest to them and asked to merge with Hogwarts in order to help protect her. The castle obliged happily.

Suddenly he was of two minds. One was himself but the other was ageless, and it was furious. He knew there were Death Eaters on the fourth floor cornering Ezra who’d been separated from his squadron. He quickly slammed them into the walls, all of them fell and none of them would be getting back up.

He knew Obi-Wan was on the bridge that led to the Astronomy Tower, doing his best to destroy Dementors but there were so many. He needed to be there. No sooner had he thought it than he was there. He didn’t even take a minute to be surprised, only casting the most powerful Patronus he’d ever felt from himself, one so bright that it destroyed the Dementor it sunk its teeth into. He knew it gave Obi-Wan joy and relief and his husband quickly used his shield and his own Patronus as one, both of them feeling righteous as the abominations were destroyed permanently.

Merlin, more Dark Wizards were coming. And some of them were different...werewolves. He knew Obi-Wan could handle the remaining Dementors so he asked to be returned to the Great Hall. A werewolf, pointed ears and fangs protruding, had it’s teeth in Daara. He cast a Confringo at it and
followed it up with one of the aconite bombs he and Sola had made. The werewolf spasmed and lay still. Daara was bleeding badly from her shoulder and Anakin sent her to the med wing.

Lux was fighting off another werewolf, his shields doing little to keep it at bay as the thing swiped at him. Anakin used another aconite bomb and it dropped. Four more Death Eaters were entering the Hall. Ahsoka wandlessly lifted a table and threw it at them, then engaged all four, making short work of the first two. Her daggers seemed to be part of arms, capable of deflecting curses and destroying enemies.

Anakin felt it then. A death on their side and both of the consciousnesses in his head screamed in outrage. It was Tyzen. He’d been so distracted with Daara and Lux that he hadn’t seen Tyzen taking on two Death Eaters. He hadn’t even heard the Killing Curse. But there was one of his friends motionless on the floor, cut down at sixteen trying to do what was right.

Not even thinking, he pushed all the magic he could at the intruders trying to get through the door. He knew it was drawing on the Dark but he was beyond caring. He felt seven masked cowards drop, no curse having even been used.

He could feel Obi-Wan’s alarm but told him he was alright. Soon Obi-Wan appeared near him and saw Tyzen. Anakin picked up his friend and asked Obi-Wan to hold the Hall while he took Tyzen to Madame Che. He knew the boy was dead but he wasn’t going to leave him on the ground like that if he didn’t have to. Madame Che helped him place his friend on a cot and with tears in her eyes turned to back to her still-living patients.

Anakin rejoined the fight. There seemed to be no end to the Death Eaters and werewolves in the school. He felt another punch to the gut. Zett Jukassa, who’d come back after graduating to help fight. He was too far away though. He felt Suna petrifying Death Eaters but she was being attacked as well. Nothing serious but she was slightly wounded. Anakin had to go help her. He and Obi-Wan ran towards the Chamber entrance and as one, dropped the Death Eaters who were attacking her. She was bleeding and Anakin figured that werewolves weren’t affected by her gaze as they’d been the ones to break her tough skin. He pressed his face to her scales and healed her, feeling affection from her.

He felt another loss. God, it was Kat Ooni. He’d trained with her so much and she shouldn’t have been fighting. She was only fifteen. He and Obi-Wan exchanged a look and were suddenly on the fifth floor where Kat had fallen. Sifo Dyas was standing over her body, smirking.

“Guess you couldn’t train all your little soldiers so well, could you, Skywalker?” He taunted. Before Anakin could kill the man a suit of armor did it for him and Dyas looked surprised to see a sword through his chest.

The flow of Death Eaters seemed to be slowing, at least. And everyone in the Chamber was still safe. He turned to Obi-Wan. “I have to end this. The longer we fight the more people die. I have to go to Palpatine.”

“I’m coming with you.”

“You can’t, you have to stay here and fight. Palpatine wants me and if you come he’ll try and kill you just to make a point. Please, I need you here.”

“Anakin, we’re in this together, we always have been.” Obi-Wan pleaded.

“We’re still together. I have you here,” he touched his temple, “and here.” He touched his heart.
“If this were me, would you honestly let me go alone? Palpatine is alone. We’re not. That’s what makes us strong.” That made Anakin pause. Obi-Wan had a point. The times he’d almost died he’d been alone physically. And this was his husband now, someone he’d sworn to stay side by side with.

“Alright, but all four of us then.” Anakin smiled grimly. He reached out to Padmé and Ahsoka, asking them to help them end this. Within minutes they were there. Obi-Wan sent his Patronus to Qui-Gon, Mace, and Yoda, asking them to fight as hard as they could and that they were going to try and end this.

Then the four of them were out of the door, heading down the path where Anakin knew Palpatine was waiting just outside the grounds. He wasn’t alone of course and there was a short battle to dispatch his eight or so guards. But four Heirs made quick work of them. Padmé’s staff and Ahsoka’s daggers were no match for any curse thrown at them. They dodged and rolled, effortlessly deflecting. Anakin noticed that Palpatine wasn’t doing anything. Reaching out he felt that the old man had lost too much of himself. He’d compromised his soul too many times and there was no kind of any real power left inside. Ahsoka took a nasty hit to her side but she was high on adrenaline and unphased.

“It’s over you old coward,” Anakin told the man wearing Ajunta Paal’s body. It seemed to be decaying a bit. And gods, it seemed a bit pitiful that this was the great climax of a battle. The supposed Dark Lord was now weaker than his followers. How was this what they’d all been so scared of?

The half-dead Wizard laughed. “My boy, even if you defeat me, you have to contend with an entire Ministry.”

“Most of your ‘Ministry’ is in there fighting a losing battle,” Obi-Wan said. “And when they’re all dead, we’ll rebuild and no one will ever remember you as anything except a scared old man who attacked children.”

Palpatine cast the Killing Curse at Obi-Wan and instinctively Anakin grabbed his shield so they were both holding it. The light from the shield held onto magic coming from Palpatine’s wand. Anakin saw pieces of the past then. His mother begging for his life, Obi-Wan’s parents being struck down so casually by the man in front of them. He felt his mother’s love, he felt the Kenobi’s worry for their son as their last thought, and he used their love and the love he had for Obi-Wan and their friends. And with it he refused death. Not now, not like this. Some half-dead monster was not going to hurt his friends or his home. They wouldn’t allow it.

“No! How is this possible?!” The old man shrieked, feeling himself losing in the push and pull of the magic. Anakin focused on joining his presence with Obi-Wan’s, and he felt Padmé and Ahsoka do the same. As one they pushed back, a flood of light overpowering the darkness of the pitiful half-dead creature in front of them. Soon the light had consumed him, and he emitted a pitiful sound. A wisp of a dark cloud emitted from his open mouth, ascending slightly until it too was destroyed by the light.

His soul, Anakin realized. That was all that was left of a human soul so corrupted. He cast a mobilicorpus and the four of them marched the body back into the castle and laid it out in the center of the Great Hall.

More students had fallen but Anakin knew now was the time to finish things. He tuned himself back into the castle along with his friends. He felt Lux and Barriss backed up against a wall, Sola was wounded, hiding from her attacker. Kanan was trying to stop the bleeding on his side and worried sick about not being able to find Ezra as he continued fighting against two opponents.
As they felt themselves move through the castle they directed suits of armor, crushed Death Eaters with thoughts using the magic in the castle itself. They lost track of time and self like that. They shattered petrified bodies of Death Eaters, protected their friends and allies, made sure that every single creature or entity who sought to harm their home was dead. When they were done they returned to themselves. They were disoriented and exhausted but the castle was safe.

“What about Hogsmeade?” Padmé asked, leaning against a wall.

“I don’t think I can walk anywhere right now, much less apperate,” Ahsoka said.

Rex and Cody came running down the hall and Rex embraced Ahsoka. “That was you, wasn’t it?” He asked, smiling.

“It was all of us,” Ahsoka said, hugging him back. “Can you get a Patronus off to someone in Hogsmeade and ask how it’s going?”

Rex quickly cast his lion Patronus and sent it off. Moments later it came back, reporting that Hogsmeade was safe. A few casualties but not as many as there could have been, and the vast majority were Death Eaters.

“Come on, love. Let’s get you to the Healer’s. You can barely stand.” Ahsoka nodded, clutching at her side, and all four of them went to the medical wing.

It was a horrific sight. There were dead students laid out in one area, the seriously wounded in the back, and the less serious injuries in the middle, near the dead. Sheets had been laid over the deceased but it was too easy to guess at who was under them. They were given restorative potions for exhaustion and send on their way as Ahsoka and more serious wounds came in. Kanan was bleeding horrifically from his leg and wasn’t responsive. Ezra wasn’t much better off.

Numbly, the six of them sat in in the Great Hall. The tables were destroyed, people were huddling under blankets, talking quietly or just providing silent comfort. Others were desperately asking about loved ones in Hogsmeade or elsewhere. This fight was over. But Dooku still had the Ministry. Anakin hoped that the Aurors could apprehend him. He didn’t know if he had another fight like this in him.

There were so many dead Death Eaters. They deserved it, he figured, but to know that so many people could attack a school and follow the orders of a mad man was horrifying. Palo and Barriss soon joined them. Sola was having a wound treated but she would be fine.

They’d done it. They’d protected the school and killed Palpatine. But he didn’t feel relief. There was too much loss, too many implications, too many loose threads to tie up. The restorative potion helped some but he was still in shock. They’d lost friends, others had lost parents, children, siblings. Having one’s home turned into a war zone of bodies and pain felt like an abomination.

The battle itself had been over so quick in some respects. It had lasted for hours, but the idea that so much had led up to something that was over in less than a day...all the attacks on non-purebloods, the Ministry takeover, the bigotry that had been spewed...It was effectively ended with on fight. A fight with high stakes and heartbreaking losses, but it was done. There would be no one left at the Ministry to carry out the previous agendas. At least for now. And the husk of a man who'd been laughably weak had been disposed of easily. It was jarring.

Qui-Gon and Avara soon approached them and tight embraces were given. “Hogsmeade is safe, the attack on both fronts is over,” Avara said, cradling her arm. “I’m off to the Healer’s but thank you, all of you for what you sacrificed.” They could only nod as Qui-Gon joined them. Hours went by in
silence. Ahsoka’s mother found them and both of them cried at the reunion. So did Auror Fett when he found both his sons safe.

There was a flash from the entrance of the Great Hall and Anakin stood, ready to destroy an attacker. But it was the press. He sat back down and all of them refused to talk to any of the press. Pictures were taken of them but there wasn’t much they could do about that. Eventually evening fell. Mace righted two of the tables and they were stocked with food though there was no seating and everyone ate on the floor. Anakin could only get a few bites down.

It seemed like a ritual now. A kind of ritual for terrible circumstances but one nonetheless. They all wordlessly went to the Room of Requirement which opened for them without needing to be passed three times. It was their room. Mattresses, beds, pajamas, a fireplace. The four of them plus Barriss, Sola, Ezra, Kanan, Palo, Rex, and Cody. Anakin showered with his husband and they both emerged in clean pajamas. Once everyone was settled in they sat around the fireplace.

“I was bitten,” Kanan said. “I wasn’t fast enough and that thing just..I’m a monster now.”

“No you’re not,” said Sola. “Just because some werewolves fought with the Dark Lord doesn’t make you a monster. Plo Koon is a werewolf and he saved you while you were in Bulgaria.”

Kanan looked surprised at that.

“Plus Anakin is the best potions student in years,” Ezra said, holding his hand. “You’ll never be out of wolfsbane.”

“You still want to be with me?” Kanan asked, clearly surprised.

“Of course I do! You’re still you. We’ll work with the werewolf thing. With where we’re from, it shouldn’t actually be much harder than the gay thing…” he mused. Kanan kissed him softly and wrapped him in a tight embrace.

After a long silence Padmé spoke. “There’s so much to do tomorrow. We have to-we have to notify families, bury our dead. We should have a memorial service here. Then there’s the Ministry-”

“Love,” Palo said. “Today we saved Hogwarts. We can let other people worry about saving the rest of the magical world for a bit. Of course we’ll have a memorial service. But we also need to rest. You helped destroy a Dark Lord.” He kissed her head. “Even Heirs and super heroes need their rest.”

Padmé smiled gratefully at him. “You’re right. Dreamless Sleeping potion anyone?” She produced a large flask from her bag. Everyone gratefully took some.

The next day was stressful to say the least. Reporters were everywhere and all of them wanted to talk to Anakin and his friends.

“How did you kill the Dark Lord?”

“What does it really mean that you’re Heirs?”

“Are you a reincarnation of Salazar Slytherin?”

“Is true you married Mr. Kenobi?”
“How many people did you kill yesterday?”

“How many students are werewolves now?”

Finally Yoda and Mace had forcibly evict the reporters after Avara shamed them for hounding young veterans mercilessly.

A team from St. Mungo’s had taken the deceased late last night. However Headmaster Yoda had erected a temporary monument in the great hall. A tapestry that listed the names of all those who had fallen defending Hogwarts hung behind the head table. It was difficult for Anakin to look at. So many students who were so young had died.

He tried to take comfort in the reunions of families who had been separated during the battle and the fact that people were safer now than they had been days before. Once the younger students had been allowed to exit the Chamber the search for parents had been frantic. But no one under fifteen had died and there was cold comfort in that.

There was of course a meeting with Yoda’s Order and the Lumos Imperious. Many Aurors and politicians who had fled the Ministry were there also. With the Dark Lord dispatched they had to figure out a plan to handle Dooku and his people. Azkaban now had hardly any Dementors left but Anakin thought that was fine. It seemed unusually cruel to subject someone to creatures that destroyed souls no matter what their crime was. Gods knew they’d have a hard time getting those wrongfully imprisoned the help they needed after being held by such monsters.

The meeting dragged on nearly all day. In the end it was decided that a team of Aurors, including Mace Windu, would lead a charge into the Ministry. Dooku may have very well fled the country already, but they could at least search the building and records and find those who had helped sell the Ministry to the Dark Lord’s crony. Some of the Lumos Imperious volunteered to go as well as many had parents who’d been imprisoned. Anakin and his friends however declined.

His place was at Hogwarts. They’d help rebuild here. There were wards that needed to be recast, structural damage to be repaired, and most importantly students who needed to feel safe again. Over the next few days he and Obi-Wan organized support groups for students and families. They helped Padmé and Ahsoka plan a memorial service for the fallen. There was now a massive stone wall outside the castle, near the west entrance, bearing the names of the fallen.

Qui-Gon led the service and made a beautiful speech. He called out every name, student or not, who had lost their lives defending Hogwarts. For each name called a friend or family member came up from the crowd of hundreds to lay a flower or small stone. At the end he ignited an eternal flame at either side of the square stone. Many people lingered, crying, mourning together.

Dooku wasn’t found but many who had supported him were incarcerated, awaiting trial while the Wizengamot reorganized. Padmé and her parents were very much involved.

Ahsoka and Rex, along with Ezra and Kanan, started a werewolf support group. Several students and other fighters had been bitten and people needed help in dealing with their new realities. Avara volunteered to start making Wolfsbane right away. Ahsoka even made sure that the new Wizengamot made provisions for werewolf equal rights and quickly put the fear of, well, Ahsoka, into any dissenters.

Barriss and Sola took charge of forming a Veterans Affairs Committee. It was imperative that those who had fought receive mental Healing, physical Healing for those seriously wounded, and there
After a few weeks of making sure that Hogwarts was safe again, that the new Ministry, while working out its bumps, was going to be effective, fair, and inclusive, Obi-Wan and Anakin discussed what they were going to do.

They were curled up in their room on the bed. “Let’s just go away for a while,” Obi-Wan said. “I mean I know we’re tied to this place for the rest of our lives, but I think Hogwarts will be alright if we disappear for a few weeks. Or months.”

“And go where?” Anakin asked. It was a nice idea.

“Wherever we want. We could have a proper honeymoon,” he grinned. “I’ve always wanted to see Rome. And Amsterdam. I’ve heard Alaska is beautiful. Or some secluded beach or mountain.”

“Yeah, let’s do it,” Anakin grinned. “We could leave tomorrow! We could go to Gringotts today, pack, say our goodbyes and be somewhere totally different before lunch!” He loved Hogwarts but he needed a break. He’d spent the last several years working hard to protect her. They were young newlyweds. They should go see a bit of the world while they could.

Leaving their room and holding hands, they rushed through the castle and apparated to Diagon Alley as soon as they left the castle wards.

Chapter End Notes

Only one more chapter left after this and it's an Epilogue. Thank you so much to everyone who read this far <3
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Twenty years after the Battle of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade:

Anakin put away his lesson plan for the past semester and returned to packing his trunk. Students had left Hogwarts for the summer a few days ago and now Hogwarts mostly just housed Professors. He’d been a Potions Master for almost thirteen years now and teaching at Hogwarts for just as long. He sometimes couldn’t believe that he’d finished his Mastery under Avara so long ago.

The months and years after the end of the war had been long and often grueling. They’d had so much to rebuild and improve. But there were also moments and milestones that made everything worth it. The Wizengamot was much more modern now and less emphasis was placed on bloodlines. Non-human sentients had nearly equal rights as well, thanks in large part to Padmé’s parents. Her mother had become Minister of Magic after an arduous battle to reclaim and restructure the Ministry.

Kanan and Ezra had married and used their leverage as war heroes to make great strides for werewolf rights. And they were some of the best Aurors on the force.

Ahsoka and Rex had also married not long after the end of the war. Anakin smiled every time he thought about his nieces. The Tano-Fett girls were twins with a mischievous streak that rivaled his and Ahsoka’s at their age. He knew he’d be in trouble when they were old enough to start at Hogwarts in a couple more years. Mace had retired and had happily handed the post of Professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts over to Ahsoka. The two were still friends and owled frequently.

Padmé and Palo stayed busy but still made time for their friends. Palo was often away working on dragon conservation but he still dropped in to teach a few classes on Care of Magical Creatures from time to time. Padmé was easier to keep in touch with as she worked at Hogwarts as well, teaching Charms. She was also the youngest Deputy Headmistress in history. Anakin knew that before much longer Headmaster Yoda would step down and Padmé would take his place. He didn’t know how she handled being a Professor, the Deputy Headmistress, having a seat on the Wizengamot, having a small child, and the two books she’d written. One had been about the war, and their friendship leading to a prepared, dueling-competent force to stand against a Dark Lord. Her other book was currently considered to be the Bible of Charms theory and practice.

Anakin, Padmé, Ahsoka, and Obi-Wan had restructured much of the Hogwarts curriculum. Muggle Studies was now required and it included fundamentals of math, science, art, and sociopolitical history as well as modern cultures. Anakin had made good on his vow to find a way to make science and magic work together and watching superhero movies at the end of every term was most students’ favorite part of the class.

Dueling was also part of the new curriculum. A new class called Combat Magic had been created and it included meditation, some traditional martial arts, and practical dueling. Professors took turns teaching as everyone had something unique to contribute. There was some objection to it being included but after Anakin and Obi-Wan had made a presentation at the Wizengamot outlining the benefits of combat knowledge and how it was the only thing that had saved Hogwarts, they got their way.

Barriss and Sola were living in France currently. They’d both needed a change of scenery after the war and had been traveling for years, staying in one city or country for a year or so and then off to a
new place. Despite pressure from Sola’s family they hadn’t gotten married. Barriss said she didn’t need Ministry approval to define her relationship and having had the issue of marriage pressed on her since she was five, she was fairly adverse to it. Sola didn’t mind at all. She was a travel writer and her aim was to promote an understanding of other magical cultures across the globe as they could be rather isolated. Barriss was a freelance cursebreaker and between them they were quite comfortable and happy.

Speaking of travel, Anakin made sure he’d packed everything they’d need. He and Obi-Wan were going on a holiday of their own. Suddenly he heard a crash and a small four year old ran in to hide behind his legs. Well, his family was going on holiday. Obi-Wan came running in after the small, sandy-haired boy.

“What did you do, sweetheart?” Anakin picked his son up.

“I’m not mad,” his husband said. “I just wanted to make sure you didn’t get hurt.” Turning to Anakin he explained. “He pulled a potted plant off the coffee table.”

“Any bumps?” Anakin asked the child on his hip. A shake of his head and Anakin set him back down and watched as the boy immediately ran off to find something else to get into. There was another crash from the living room.

“Sebastian Owen Skywalker-Kenobi!” Anakin said loudly. The only response was a high pitched giggle. Anakin shook his head and kissed Obi-Wan. His husband kissed him back enthusiastically. He always felt a little overwhelmed with a sense of honor when he thought about how long Obi-Wan had stood by him, and how much they’d gone through together. They’d had their ups and downs as a couple but they were always there for each other.

Obi-Wan taught Herbology as Depa Billaba had retired at the same time as Mace. And like Anakin he was a Head of House. They still sometimes switched ties and held hands in the school corridors. They had dinner with Qui-Gon and Avara frequently. The couple opened an apothecary in Diagon Alley were living quietly and happily together. Obi-Wan helped them keep their inventory up. He also did trainings with Aurors in combat magic during the summer months so they could use the Room of Requirement. Anakin helped sometimes, too, but he found that after the war his interest in combat simulation had waned. It was hard to train people in combat without feeling the urgency and anxiety that had spurred the need to do so so many years before. It often brought back memories of running through the castle and hoping that his friends weren’t dead and afterwards he’d sit at the memorial outside for long hours by himself. So he mostly stuck to the classroom where dueling was concerned.

He leaned into Obi-Wan and dropped a kiss on the top of his head. They were going to France for a visit with Barriss and Sola and then to Aruba. He didn’t care much for sand and sun, but Obi-Wan did and seeing him happily playing with Sebastian on the beach would be well worth it.

“Read, love?” He asked Obi-Wan.

“For our next adventure? Always.”

Chapter End Notes

This was the first story I've ever written from beginning to end and I kind of can't believe it's done. I'll be going back and fixing some pretty grievous typos and
inconsistencies, but thank you for bearing through this with me! It was a blast to write and I've learned a lot about improving my writing. (At least I hope I have.) Any comments are greatly appreciated as feedback keeps me going. I'm going to try and finish The Middle Path next and then rework Secret Agent Man. Then I have this idea for a Star Wars/Avatar: The Last Airbender crossover floating around in my head. Anyway, thank you again for seeing me through my first story and if you didn't start reading until I finished, thank you as well for taking the time to go through it. XOXO

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!